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HOW THE REVOLUTION DESCENDED INTO CHAOS

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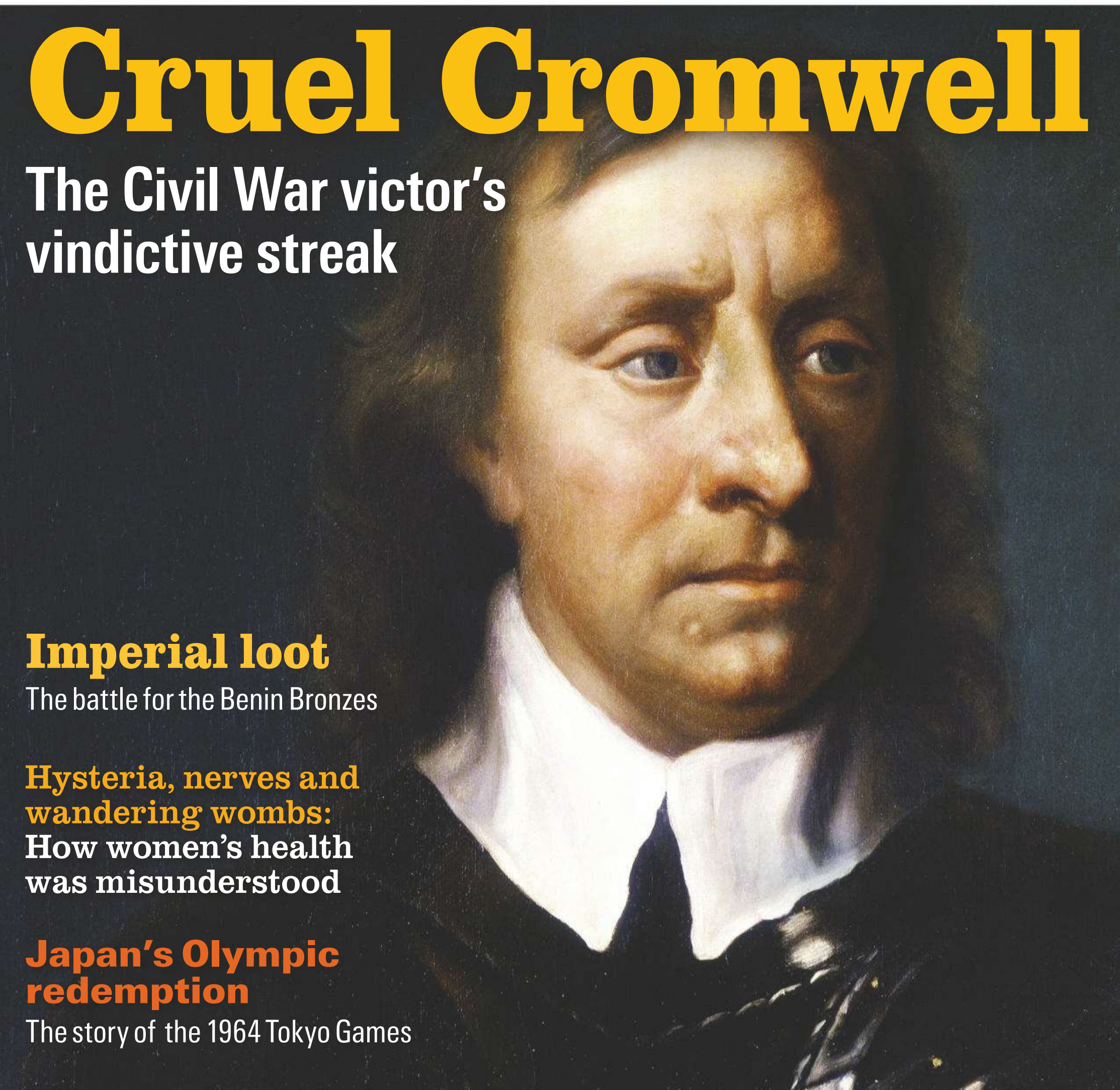
Cruel Cromwell
The Civil War victor's vindictive streak



Imperial loot
The battle for the Benin Bronzes

Hysteria, nerves and wandering wombs:
How women's health was misunderstood

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The story of the 1964 Tokyo Games

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AUGUST 2021

BBC HISTORY MAGAZINE

"In October 1964 the athlete Yoshinori Sakai lit the flame at the opening ceremony of the **Tokyo Olympics**. He had been born just over 19 years earlier, on the same day that the US dropped the atomic bomb on Hiroshima. This was no coincidence. Sakai was chosen for the role to symbolise Japan's journey from the dark days of the war to its triumphant reconstruction as a modern, technological and welcoming nation – a thread that ran throughout the Games. As the second Tokyo Olympics is about to begin, Christopher Harding revisits the 1964 Games, showing how it reshaped the country's reputation at home and abroad. You'll find his piece on page 50.

Reshaping reputations is also the theme of this month's cover feature, where Ronald Hutton is taking a fresh look at **Oliver Cromwell.** In his piece, Hutton argues that, though the Civil War victor was a man of undoubted talents, he could also be "ruthless, devious and self-promoting". That's on page 43.

One of the biggest debates around the legacy of empire concerns the repatriation of artefacts taken by imperial powers, and now often residing in European museums. Among the most famous examples of these are the **Benin Bronzes**, which were looted from Africa following a British raid in 1897. On page 68, Bronwen Everill explores the competing arguments about their future, but also considers the creation of the Bronzes and the history of the kingdom that produced them.

I hope you enjoy the issue.

Rob Attar Editor

THREE THINGS I'VE LEARNED THIS MONTH

1. Britain was a chess haven

As a keen chess player myself I was fascinated to read that emigres from revolutionary France helped turn London into the centre of the chess world at the turn of the 19th century (page 36).

2. War inspired beards

I was interested to learn that during the 19th century many British men took inspiration from hirsute soldiers in the Crimean War to grow their own impressive facial hair (page 59).

3. Laundry women washed condoms

Among the numerous revelations in our interview with Fern Riddell is the surprising fact that men would take their sheep-gut condoms to be cleaned by laundry women (page 81).

THIS ISSUE'S CONTRIBUTORS

Ronald Hutton

"I discuss in my current book the rise of Oliver Cromwell, which shows him to be as impressively gifted as was always thought, but also much more ruthless, duplicitous and ambitious." **Ronald explores the dark side of the Civil War victor** on page 43

Elinor Cleghorn

"When I became an unwell woman I began to mine the annals of medicine for answers, and found an infuriating and fascinating history of myths, beliefs and assumptions about women's bodies, minds and lives." **Elinor traces the misogyny that has infused medicine since the ancient Greeks** on page 60

Christopher Harding

"Across their long history the people of Japan have shown a tremendous talent for reinvention – drawing on the past to create something new. The 1964 Tokyo Olympics was a vivid example of that." **Christopher considers how the 1964 Games changed Japan's reputation** on page 50

Bronwen Everill

"The kingdom of Benin is a great example of the dynamism of politics, culture and society in precolonial west Africa, and the tragedy of colonial invasion. The Bronzes are extraordinary artefacts of that lost world." **Bronwen reveals the history behind the stunning Benin Bronzes** on page 68

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COVER: PORTRAIT OF OLIVER CROMWELL BY PETER LELY, C1653: GETTY IMAGES. FRENCH FLAG: DREAMSTIME. THIS PAGE: STEVE SAYERS/JENI NOTT/ALAMY/GLEN MCBETH/ALAMY

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Christopher Harding revisits the 1964 Games, which Japan used to transform its global reputation from postwar pariah to high-tech go-getter

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Elinor Cleghorn reveals how medical misogyny has distorted our understanding of female biology over the centuries

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Bronwen Everill delves into the history of the exquisite artworks, and the African kingdom that made them, as debates rage over whether the bronzes should be returned

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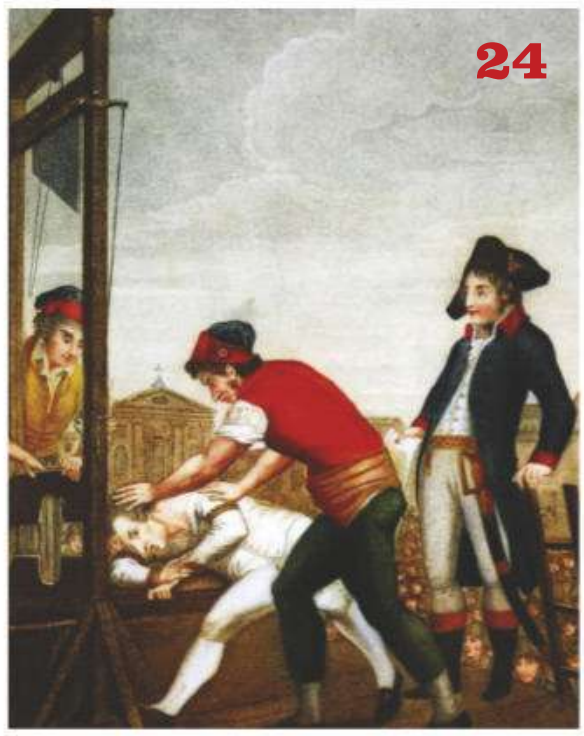
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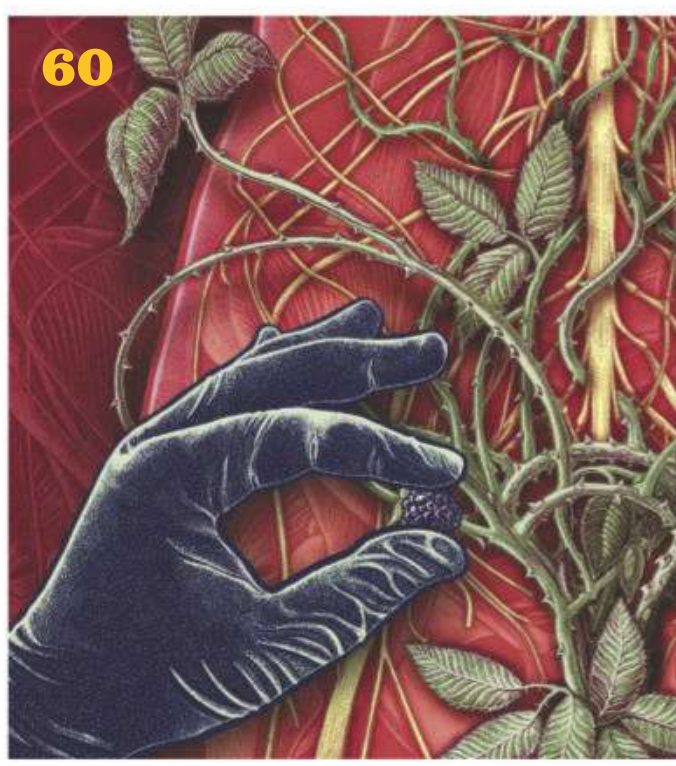
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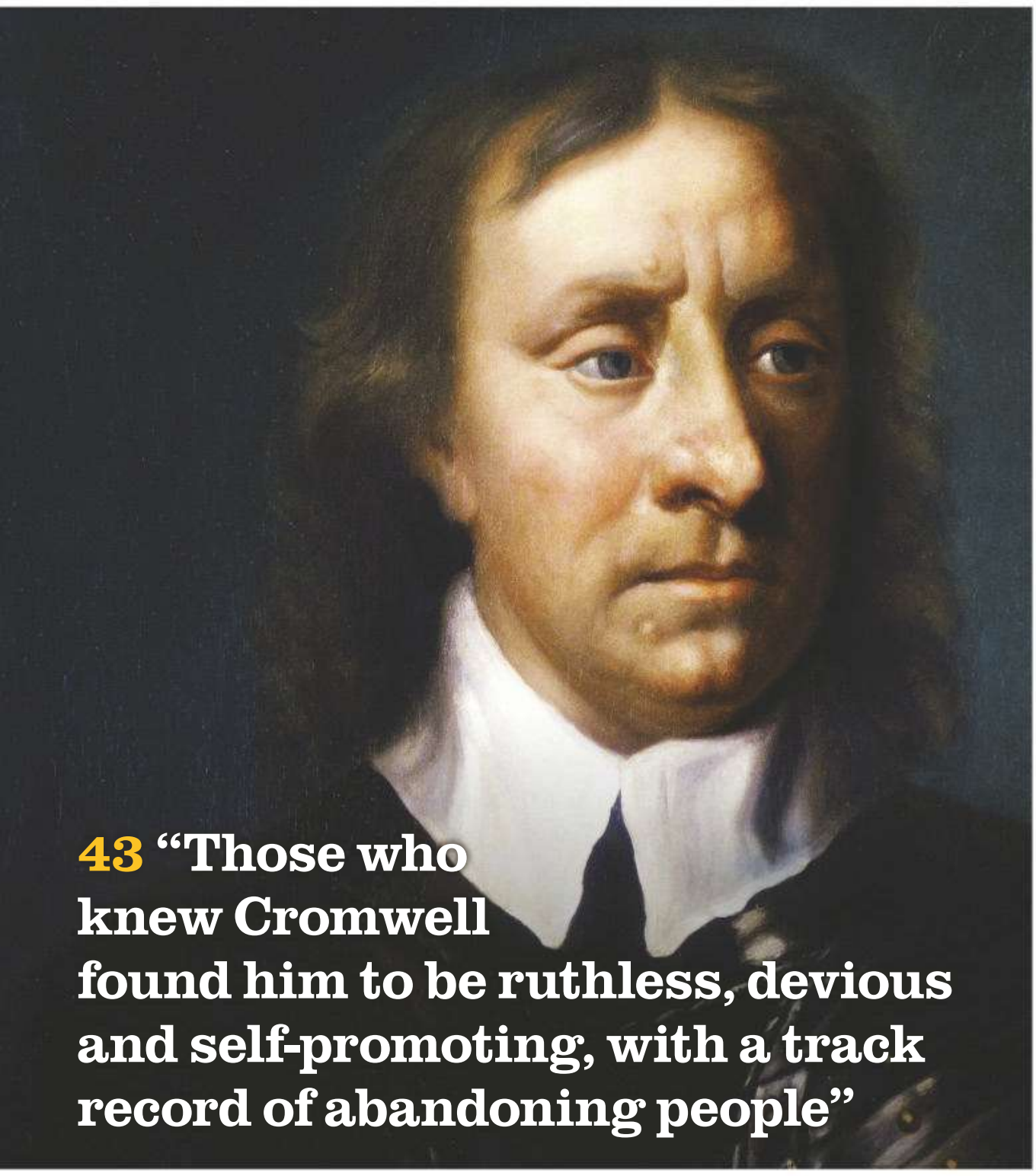

43 **"Those who knew Cromwell found him to be ruthless, devious and self-promoting, with a track record of abandoning people"**

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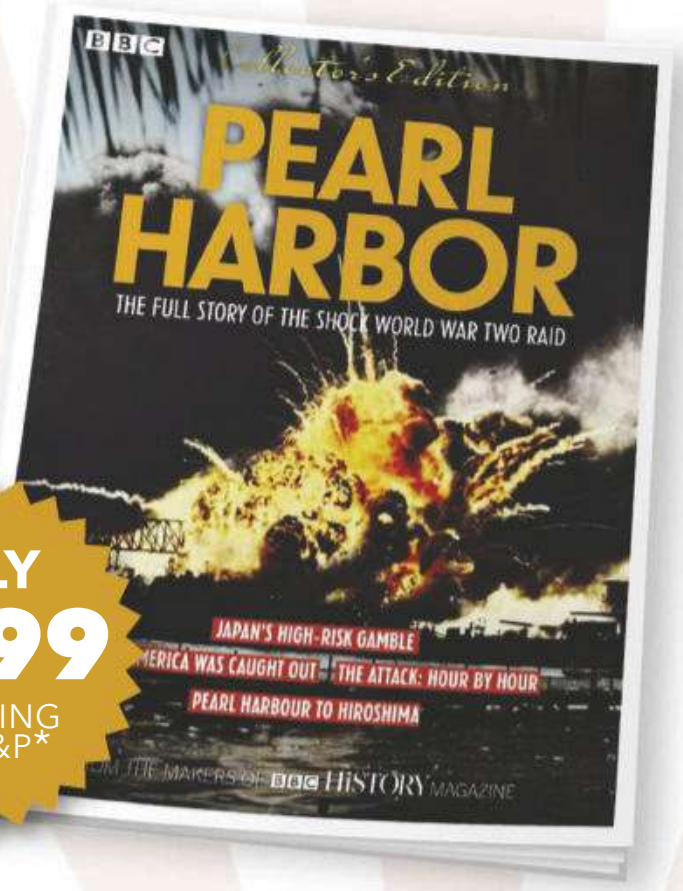
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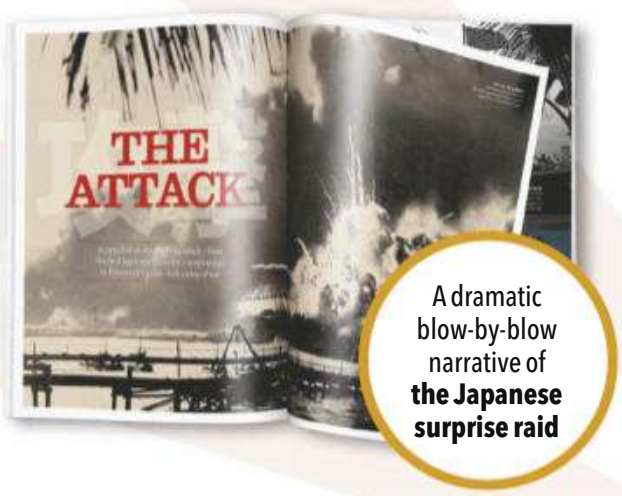

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THIS MONTH IN HISTORY

EYE-OPENER

Stolen treasures

These rosary beads, pictured with a bible that also belonged to Mary, Queen of Scots, were carried by the queen to her execution in 1587 – and are among the artefacts that were taken in a raid on Arundel Castle in Sussex in May. The objects also include cups given to Mary for her coronation in 1543.

A spokeperson said: "The stolen items have significant monetary value but, as unique artefacts of the Duke of Norfolk's collection, have immeasurably greater and priceless historical importance."

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TALKING POINTS
Set in stone?

News that an Oxford college intends to keep on display its statue of Cecil Rhodes reignited the debate over effigies of controversial figures. **ANNA WHITELOCK** charted Twitter's response

Citing financial and logistical concerns, the University of Oxford's Oriel College announced in May that it is reversing its earlier decision to remove a statue of controversial 19th-century alumnus Cecil Rhodes, which will instead stay in place alongside material contextualising his legacy.

Conservative MP and historian **Chris Skidmore** (@CSkidmoreUK) was among those who tweeted in support of Oriel's volte-face, writing: "Good. Rhodes must stay. Retain and explain. Make Rhodes part of an enhanced curriculum on the reality of empire. But don't pretend the statue never existed. The responsibility of the present is to preserve our past for the future." **Peter Mandler** (@PeterMandler1) swiftly rejected such an interpretation. "Most people who want to take such statues down don't want to 'pretend they never existed' but, to the contrary, to re-present them not in an honorific but in an educational setting," he wrote. "Tell more history, not less. I don't think it's entirely honest to suggest otherwise."

Historian and *Guardian* columnist **Simukai Chigudu** (@SimuChigudu) argued forcefully that this was more than just about a statue and that: "In the context of a worldwide movement against race hate, Oriel College's position is cynical and makes no sense." For **Julia Blatchford** (@Julia Blatchford) what made no sense was what she saw as "the breathtaking hypocrisy of wanting to write him [Rhodes] out of history whilst still hanging on to his money".

Join the debate at **twitter.com/historyextra**

Barrie Hunter (@barriephunter) wrote that "the fundamental questions are whose heritage and how we retain that heritage. The difference between acknowledgement and celebration needs to be clear." Meanwhile, **Peter Storey** (@PeterRStorey) asked provocatively: "At Trinity [College] in Cambridge, Henry VIII stands above the Great Gate – a man far greedier and with less care for human life than Rhodes. Should his statue go? Or is there a cut-off period? Are 16th-century tyrants more acceptable than 19th?"

Faruq (@Faruq10101) argued that "This conflation of a statue with history is disingenuous. A statue is an idol, and in Britain, typically a show of power. If anything… aligning statues with history maligns historians." **John Carins** (@john_carins) summed up the opposing view: "Rhodes is an important historical figure and his statue should remain. These statues belong to us all; it's our heritage; it's not for a minority set of leftwing, Oxford wokeists to decide its future."

And with the news that some University of Oxford lecturers are refusing to give tutorials at Oriel due to the decision to retain the statue, this debate looks set to run and run. H

Anna Whitelock is professor of the history of monarchy and head of the history department at Royal Holloway University of London

The statue of Cecil Rhodes at Oriel College, University of Oxford, is set to remain on display – provoking a storm of controversy on Twitter

Sudhir Hazareesingh, whose profile of Haitian Revolution leader Toussaint Louverture has won a key history prize

PUBLISHING

Haitian history wins major literary award

A biography of revolutionary leader Toussaint Louverture has won the 2021 Wolfson History Prize, the UK's most prestigious award for historical writing.

University of Oxford academic Sudhir Hazareesingh's *Black Spartacus*, published by Allen Lane, explores how the formerly enslaved Louverture became leader of Haiti's black population and commander of its republican army fighting France in the Haitian Revolution of 1791–1804. Drawing on previously overlooked archival material, the book explores Louverture's remarkable character and the way in which his life intersected with the prevailing historical currents of his era.

Praising Hazareesingh's work, historian and chair of the judging panel David Cannadine said: "*Black Spartacus* vividly recreates the extraordinary career of the leader and hero of the Haitian Revolution, which reverberated far beyond that island and far beyond the Caribbean. This is an erudite and elegant biography with a message that resonates strongly in our own time."

Hazareesingh's book secured the top spot over fellow nominees including Helen McCarthy, whose book *Double Lives* explored the history of working motherhood; Rebecca Clifford, for *Survivors: Children's Lives After the Holocaust*; and Richard Ovenden, for *Burning the Books: A History of Knowledge Under Attack*. You can hear some of the shortlisted authors discuss the importance of popular history on our podcast at *bit.ly/WolfsonHistoryPrize2021* H

REUTERS/ASTRID DI CROLLALANZA

HISTORY IN THE NEWS

A selection of the stories hitting the **history headlines**

Victims of the Spanish Civil War whose remains are the focus of a new search in a civil cemetery

▲ Researchers recover Spanish Civil War victims

An initiative to identify the remains of people executed during and immediately after the Spanish Civil War is under way in a civil cemetery south of Madrid. Experts from institutions including Cranfield University and Complutense University of Madrid have joined forces to find and exhume 26 bodies interred at Almagro, in southern Spain.

The war began in 1936 with a military revolt, supported by conservative political groups, against the country's Republican government. The following three years were marked by bloody brutality and mass executions of political opponents; nationalist forces under Francisco Franco eventually claimed victory in 1939. The victims being identified in the current project were buried in 1939, the year the war ended, and 1940, while Franco ruled as dictator.

The team is using DNA analysis to identify some of the remains, which will be returned to living relatives with any personal possessions found at the site. Those who can't be identified are set to be reburied in an official cemetery. The research is due to be completed before the end of the year.

For sale: Cold War bunker, complete with TV studio ▼

A Grade II-listed bunker designed to allow the UK government to continue to function in the event of nuclear conflict has gone up for sale. The Nottingham facility, known as the "Kremlin", was constructed in the 1950s as a civil defence command centre before being adapted as a regional government building in the 1960s. Though decommissioned in the 1990s, it still features Cold War-era amenities including a messaging system using pneumatic tubes, and a television studio for emergency broadcasts.

The Cold War-era bunker in Beechdale, north-west Nottingham, spans three storeys and is being sold with two hectares of land

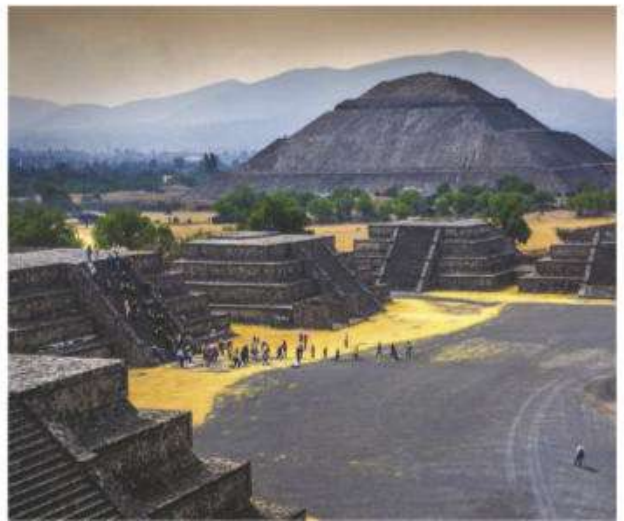
GEMA ORTIZ IGLESIAS/HOMES ENGLAND/ROLAND DELLER/GETTY/JORGE GONZALEZ/ELENA SANTOS

▲ Church updates carvings to show "inspirational women"

With its medieval carvings succumbing to the ravages of time, a Yorkshire church has hit upon a novel solution – to replace them with depictions of inspirational women from history. St Mary's Church in Beverley is nine centuries old, and some of its statues have crumbled beyond recognition. The new project aims to highlight women who thrived in traditionally male-dominated arenas, including pioneering pilot Amy Johnson (above) and scientist Marie Curie. The resulting stone figures will go on display in November.

Building work put ancient Mexico site at risk ▼

Following several suspension orders and a criminal complaint, Mexican authorities appear to have successfully blocked an unauthorised construction project near the ancient Mesoamerican city of Teotihuacán (below), in the Valley of Mexico. It's thought that owners of nearby land may have been attempting to develop an ecotourism park near Teotihuacán, which dates back to at least 100 BC and has been a Unesco World Heritage Site since 1987. The Mexican government and UN officials expressed alarm at the project, which would have put an area as large as 2.8 hectares at risk.



Child grave is "Africa's earliest known funeral" ▼

Researchers in Kenya have uncovered the oldest known burial site in Africa, dating from 78,000 years ago and holding the remains of a three-year-old child. Scans show that the body (shown right) was wrapped in a foetal position, with its head resting on what may have been a cushion of leaves. One of the experts, María Martinón-Torres, said: "There is such a delicacy and intention that really expresses feelings from the group towards this child. He was buried in the cave where the people lived. This behaviour meant something – maybe grief, maybe not letting him go." H

The memorials' missing men

The failure to properly commemorate black and Asian troops who served the British empire in the First World War made headlines in April, with the UK government issuing an official apology. **MICHÈLE BARRETT** explains how her research was key to breaking the story

In April, the UK's secretary of state for defence, Ben Wallace, announced in parliament the findings of a Commonwealth War Graves Commission (CWGC) report. It found that the organisation had failed to commemorate large numbers of Indian, Egyptian and other African troops after the First World War, either to the same standard as those who had fought on the western front, or even at all – with the number possibly being as high as 400,000. Wallace offered an official apology on behalf of the government of the time, the current government, and the CWGC, and made a commitment to put things right. The story attracted extensive coverage, much of which quoted the report's reference to the "pervasive racism" of the time.

The apology followed a 2019 Channel 4 documentary, *Unremembered*, presented by Labour MP David Lammy and based on my research. It revealed that a policy that was applied on the western front after the war, whereby cemeteries equally commemorated people of all social classes and military ranks, had not been employed outside Europe. As a result, many Indian and African soldiers, porters and carriers had either been commemorated only in general terms, with no individual names, or were not commemorated at all.

The documentary's findings prompted the CWGC to establish a special committee to investigate the situation. It revealed that tens of thousands of Indians were not commemorated by name on memorials such as that in Basra (in modern-day Iraq) – despite the Imperial War Graves Commission, or IWGC [as the commission was known until 1960] having their names, and including them in printed registers. More than half of the Indians killed in the war were not commemorated to the European standard, while perhaps as many as 350,000 Africans (some of whom had been forcibly recruited) were not properly honoured.

On the day of the government apology, David Olusoga – the historian and broadcaster whose production company made the Channel 4 documentary – was a guest on BBC Radio 4's *Today* programme. Describing the story, Olusoga said: "It is an absolute scandal. It is one of the biggest scandals I've ever come across as an historian, but the biggest scandal is that this was known years ago." Indeed, despite knowing about the story for more than a decade, prior to 2019 the CWGC did not respond explicitly to this research, although for some while they had been silently correcting memorials. While the commission had sought to blame the lack of commemoration on the attitudes of colonial governments, their own archives show that many of its staff regarded Africans as lacking the "civilisation" to appreciate commemoration.

Collective commemoration The Askari monument in Tanzania, for Africans killed in the First World War. Such statues took the place of individual memorials to African troops

Family ties Mwamkono Mwavaka, who lost his grandfather in the First World War, and his wife featured in the 2019 documentary *Unremembered*. The film triggered an investigation by the CWGC

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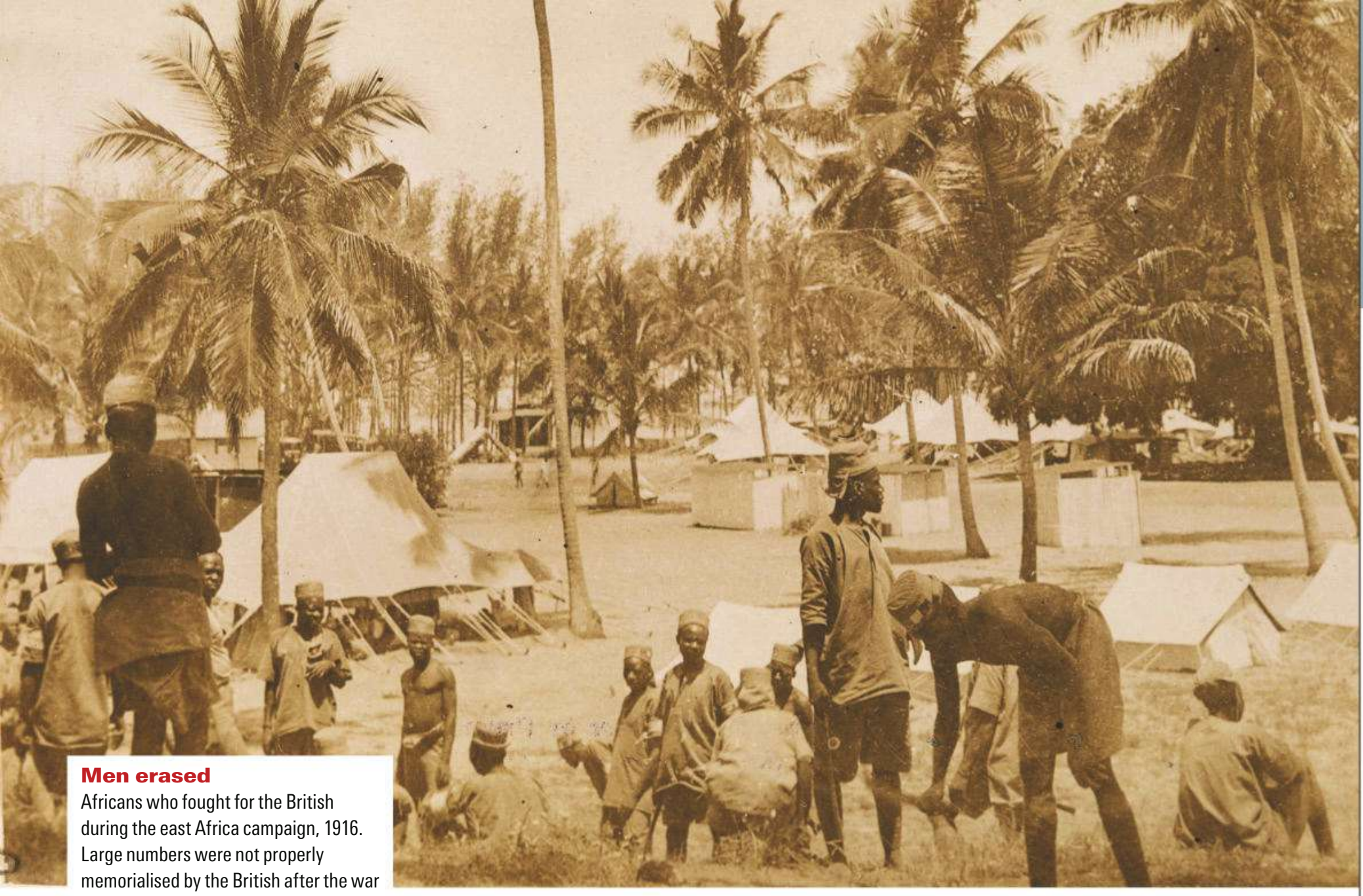


Men erased
Africans who fought for the British during the east Africa campaign, 1916. Large numbers were not properly memorialised by the British after the war

BRIDGEMAN

The film that triggered the CWGC's response was based on my own studies. I began that research in 2004 when, puzzled by the deletion of the word "Indian" in the registers of the Neuve Chapelle Memorial in France [which commemorates British Indian soldiers with no known grave who died in the First World War], I wrote to the CWGC to ask why this was. Their answer was that it had been carried out due to pressure from Pakistan to redesignate the memorial an Indo-Pakistani one. I decided to call up the archive files for Neuve Chapelle and Basra.

The contrast between the two was striking. The Neuve Chapelle memorial on the western front meticulously lists the names and details of the approximately 5,000 soldiers and followers from India who had perished in Europe at the time of the Indian army deployment there in 1914–15. The memorial at Basra, meanwhile, commemorates nearly 33,000 people who died in the campaign in Mesopotamia – but features only the names of white personnel and Indian officers. Approximately 30,000 Indian rank and file – sepoys, supporters and followers – are mentioned only in terms of the number who served in each military unit. Their names were known, but kept in printed registers.

A lack of equality

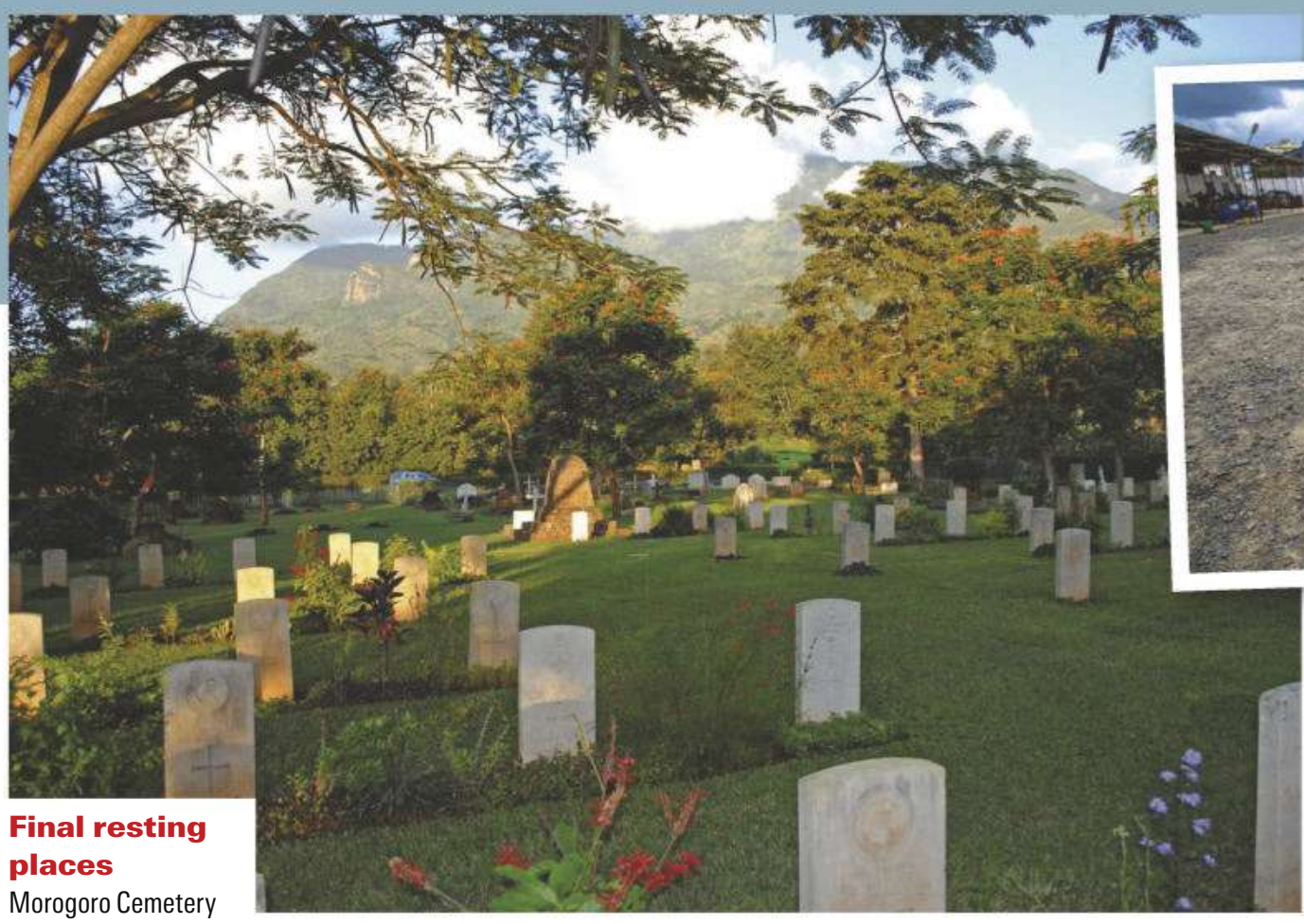
The Basra files made it clear that the policy of equality of treatment in death, so strikingly and progressively enacted on the western front, simply did not apply elsewhere. Archive files for Africa, for instance, revealed a stark contrast between the way in which white people and "natives" were treated. Staff at the organisation routinely referred to "white graves", which included those of German and other enemy forces as well as white British people, and went to a great deal of trouble to make these graves permanent. This was often done via a policy of "concentration", in which the remains of white casualties were exhumed and reburied in larger permanent cemeteries. In many cases the bodies of white Europeans were removed from cemeteries, while a larger number of African people were left behind, their bodies left to "revert to nature" and their graves deemed "unmaintainable".

In east Africa, the rule was that no African person should receive named commemoration. The policy for "natives" was that they should be considered missing (in official parlance, "sent missing") – particularly poignant, given that, unlike their counterparts in Europe, memorials to the "missing" of the campaign bore no names at all.

I first published my research on the subject in a 2007 journal article, which I sent to the then director-general of the CWGC that November, asking for his comments. He told me that a policy had been agreed in the 1990s of adding names to memorials in cases in which they had been recorded in their registers. I continued my research, publishing papers and giving lectures on the topic around the world.

In 2014, I decided to go to east Africa to see what the archive files described. I headed to the town of Voi, in southern Kenya, with a copy of a 1922 letter from the commission's archives written to London by the local director of works. In it, he suggested that Africans buried as Christians were "worthy of commemoration compared with the numerous other natives who had died in the vicinity". When I raised the issue with the cemetery's caretaker, he asked if I would like to

"The Basra files made it clear that the policy of equality of treatment in death, so strikingly enacted on the western front, simply did not apply elsewhere"



Final resting places
Morogoro Cemetery in Tanzania. Michèle Barrett highlights the contrast between such well-maintained sites and the burial places of other people who served in the First World War

Lost burial grounds
Labour MP David Lammy in the city of Dar es Salaam in Tanzania during the filming of the 2019 Channel 4 documentary *Unremembered*

see where the other Africans had been buried. Taking me around the side of the cemetery, bounded by solid walls, he showed me a patch of land. The contrast between the immaculate cemetery and the neglected scrub outside was dramatic.

Further trips to Kenya and Tanzania left me equally shocked. There I found beautiful cemeteries, impeccably maintained, but which excluded Africans who had died.

Denying the problem

The IWGC policy was based on a 1917 report by Major George Evans, the officer commanding the Graves Registration Unit in east Africa. He opined that headstones for lowly personnel such as porters would be a waste of public money – a view shared by Lord Arthur Browne, who largely ran the commission in the 1920s. At an even higher level, the colonial secretary, Winston Churchill, set out the IWGC policy that memorials to "natives" would not normally be individual, but that statues would instead be put up in local towns.

Many reasons were advanced for these policies, including that Africans "do not attach any sentiment to marking the graves of their dead" – which anthropology suggests is an exception rather than the rule for peoples in Africa.

A more telling argument, often repeated, was that the commission did not have any names. Yet the CWGC report shows that such records for some of these men did exist at the time – and that staff lacked interest in obtaining the information. For instance, although it's estimated that up to 350,000 carriers died uncommemorated, the Carrier Corps in east Africa was run by a very diligent officer named Lieutenant Colonel Watkins. He had an elaborate system of registering the carriers and recording their pay, and I found a roll of names among his private papers – yet, as far as I know, no attempt was made to obtain their details. It's among several instances in which it's clear that the commission was not interested in pursuing this information.

"The commission's report points out that its failure to properly commemorate African and Indian personnel in the First World War has led to public ignorance of their contribution"

My findings have now been corroborated by research undertaken for the CWGC committee by its chief historian and his assistant researcher. Yet it has taken a long time for the commission to register their significance. This is partly because its official history, first published in 1967 and reprinted many times since, denies the problem. This document states that the commission "shouldered its burden" across Africa and Asia, that every individual grave was cared for, and that there was "no withdrawal from responsibility".

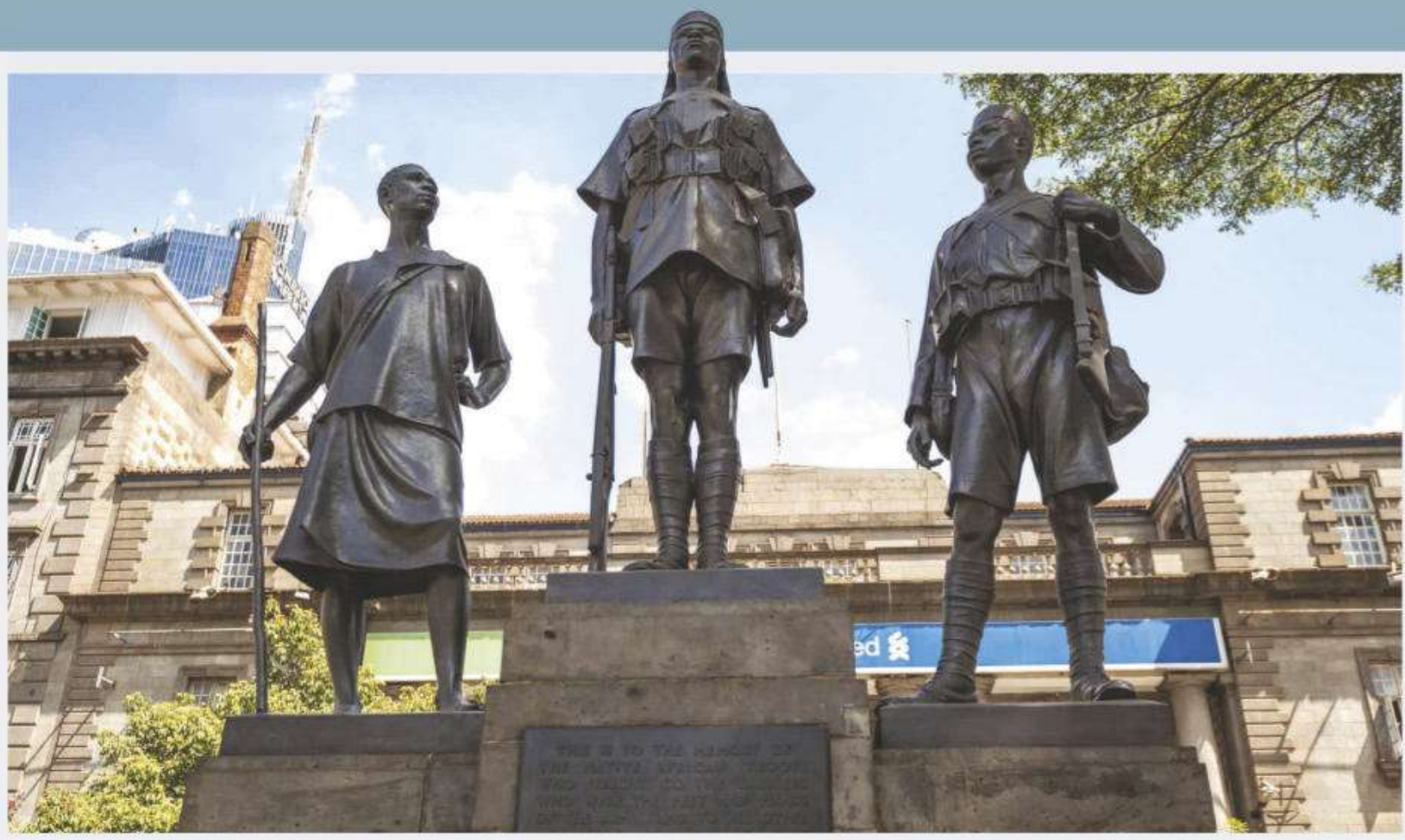
This is both a myth and an important part of the myth-making that the CWGC worked on over the years. It is extremely proud of its progressive policies on social class and military rank, but has been unwilling to confront the extent of the racism that I believe mars its historical reputation. The CWGC report notes that the commission's history has been "sanitised" (for example, I would suggest, in its official history), and makes the key point that its failure to properly commemorate Africans and Indian personnel in the First World War has led to public ignorance of the contributions they made.

The research done by the CWGC, and my own team, has shown several avenues where it might be possible to find the records of those who died, particularly in east Africa. I hope that, with a new and constructive attitude at the commission, we can work together to find some of these men who were so appallingly just "sent missing". H

Michèle Barrett is professor emeritus at Queen Mary University of London. Her research on this topic is available online at *michelebarrett.com*

WATCH **Unremembered: Britain's Forgotten War Heroes** is available on Channel 4's catchup service All 4: *channel4.com/programmes/unremembered-britains-forgotten-war-heroes*

MICHELE BARRETT/CHANNEL 4



Honouring the dead
A CWGC memorial in Nairobi, Kenya. The commission's historian George Hay stresses that the organisation is "willing to confront a difficult past with honesty, integrity and transparency"

"Our task now is to put right what we can"

The CWGC's official historian **George Hay** on the commission's next steps

Following the broadcast of *Unremembered*, I was asked to work with a newly established special committee of experts and community representatives to investigate historical inequalities in commemoration. We were looking for divergence, particularly from the CWGC's core principle of equality in death. Much of what we found came as a surprise, and there is no doubt that the report we published makes for difficult reading. But it is also a document of which the CWGC can be proud: of the fact that the organisation is willing to confront a difficult past with honesty, integrity and transparency, and also that it was not an exercise in academic catharsis but a catalyst for positive action.

The global former battlefields of the First World War were not alike. During this study we saw how weather, composition of soil, wild animals and even the theft of grave markers could make the recovery of the dead difficult or even impossible. This led to differences in the way in which the commission worked and the dead were commemorated. Far more significant in this respect, however, were the consequences of decisions taken by the armed forces, colonial authorities and, most importantly, the Imperial War Graves Commission itself. The reasons are many and complex, and I strongly encourage people to read the report. Nevertheless, the conclusions state that, primarily across Africa and the Middle East, upwards of 45,000 men were commemorated differently to those in Europe, and potentially more than 116,000 men were not commemorated by name or potentially not commemorated at all.

These numbers speak for themselves, and the report pulls no punches when it comes to details and responsibilities, but perhaps more important are the 10 recommendations made by the committee. These are targeted at addressing these issues, and the CWGC has embraced them in their entirety. Our task now is not to dwell on the failures of the past but to apply ourselves and our resources to putting right what we can.

That work has already started. We have begun the search for names. We are engaging affected communities and sharing our findings. We are progressing plans for physical and digital commemoration, and we are creating education and community outreach programmes so that future generations appreciate the contributions and sacrifices made by all Commonwealth servicemen and women.

> "There is no doubt that the report we published makes for difficult reading. But it is also a document of which the CWGC can be proud"

The CWGC's achievements in the aftermath of the world wars remain extraordinary, but we are grateful to Professor Barrett and David Lammy for casting a spotlight on this important part of our history, and to the special committee for helping to bring the full extent of the issue to light. A century ago, we believe we failed these men and their families. We will not fail them again.

The CWGC of today retains an enduring conviction that the promises we made to those we were established to serve remain binding, and it is without hesitation that we reaffirm our commitment to our founding principles of commemoration in perpetuity and with equal treatment for all. Above all, the CWGC will continue in its mission to live up to a promise made more than a century ago and inscribed in stone at CWGC sites around the globe: "Their name liveth for evermore". H

George Hay is the CWGC's official historian, and co-author of the report into historical cases of non-commemoration: *cwgc.org/non-commemoration-report*

CWGC

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MICHAEL WOOD ON...
UNDERSTANDING THE "CHINESE WAY"

"In China, the fear of chaos and the desire for order come first"

This summer, China is on everyone's radar. News reports and water-cooler conversations cover Hong Kong, AI, Taiwan and the human rights situation in Xinjiang. President Biden visited Europe and Britain, perhaps in an effort to strengthen the western alliance as a new Cold War looms. Meanwhile, in the aftermath of Brexit, Boris Johnson's "Global Britain" courts the Pacific zone, in the face of warnings from China's "wolf warrior" diplomats. As always this state of affairs has precedents in history. Let me take you back to the time Britain genuinely was global – when it ruled an "empire on which the sun never sets".

In 1793, the man who coined that phrase, Lord George Macartney, led the first delegation from Britain to China. After the American War of Independence and the French Revolution, geopolitics were shifting at alarming speed. Expanding their power in India, the British now hoped to open up trade with the world's oldest civilisation and biggest national economy. With them they carried a cargo of instruments, clocks, Lancashire textiles, chandeliers, guns, telescopes, Wedgwood dishes, a model battleship and two "mechanical chairs". This display of "modern" arts and manufactures was intended to show Britain's wealth and ingenuity – and the strength of its ideas.

The senior mandarins chose their gifts very carefully, too, presenting exquisitely woven silks, a magnificent dragon robe, carved lacquer boxes and precious jade sceptres, all displaying China's glorious cultural heritage, its wealth and its enduring civilisational values.

The Qianlong emperor told the British that his job was to "think of his ancestors, and make it the grand object of his life to advance the happiness of his people". Macartney, meanwhile, wanted a special trade deal, a permanent embassy and an offshore treaty port (as Hong Kong would become) in the belief that modern commercial relations would be good for the future of China as well as cementing Britain's global pre-eminence .

Yet the mission was a failure. China was self-sufficient in all things, Qianlong said, and needed nothing from the British. No trading concessions were offered, and Macartney came away with the conviction that China was a civilisation no longer in touch with the modern world.

I'm still struck by the relevance of this story, which is not only about trade but, really, about ideas. Macartney believed that modernity – as defined by the European Enlightenment – was the future path, and that China was in terminal decline, like "an old, crazy, first-rate Man of War, which a fortunate succession of able and vigilant officers have contrived to keep afloat for these 150 years past… but *she can never be rebuilt on the old bottom*".

But she has been. After 1949, western China-watchers noted the uncanny way the Communist Party had replicated the bureaucratic tyrannies of the Ming and Qing dynasties. Under Mao, there were huge disasters – the Great Famine of 1959–61, the Cultural Revolution – but his idea of permanent revolution was not the "Chinese way" as Deng Xiaoping saw it just over 40 years ago, when he launched the policy of "reform and opening up" that transformed China. Now a superpower, on track to be the world's biggest economy, today's Leninist authoritarian bureaucracy is presented by President Xi Jinping as the embodiment of the "Chinese way", and polls suggest it is seen as legitimate by most Chinese people. Qianlong would, perhaps, approve.

It may be too early to tell. The rhythms of Chinese history are slower than those of other cultures; the dust is only just settling on the Chinese Revolution, and party rule will end at some point. But those exchanges in 1793 offered insights into the Chinese mind even now. For all its astounding creativity, Chinese history is marked by periods of violence and breakdown. The fear of chaos and the desire for order come first: the collective, not the individual. In 1793, Qianlong said that the most important thing was maintaining the "way" handed down by the ancestors. His gifts symbolised the values of a country the British would struggle to understand for the next two centuries, and still provide a key to understanding the Chinese way of seeing and thinking today.

Michael Wood is professor of public history at the University of Manchester. He has presented numerous BBC series, and his books include *The Story of China* (Simon & Schuster, 2020). His twitter handle is @mayavision

ILLUSTRATION BY **FEMKE DE JONG**

ANNIVERSARIES

DOMINIC SANDBROOK highlights events that took place in August in history

9 AUGUST 378

Goths slaughter the Eastern Roman emperor Valens

Butchery heralds the demise of Rome's overwhelming military might

Perhaps the Eastern Roman emperor Valens should have seen what was coming. "After many true predictions of seers and augurs," wrote the historian Ammianus Marcellinus of the summer of 378, "dogs leaped back when wolves howled, night birds rang out a kind of doleful lament, the sun rose in gloom and dimmed the clear morning light."

Yet when Valens marched out from the Balkan town of Adrianople (now Edirne, in north-western Turkey) to face the invading Goths, he was confident of victory. Instead of waiting for reinforcements from the west, the experienced Valens, emperor in Constantinople for the previous 14 years, was determined to finish off the barbarians himself. Rising early on 9 August, he drove his men north for hours in punishing heat to find the Gothic camp. At last, wrote Ammianus, the scouts spotted "the wagons of the enemy", and the battle began.

For the Romans, it was an utter catastrophe. Encircled by the lighter Gothic horsemen, they were cut to pieces. Some said Valens himself was felled by an arrow. Others reported that the emperor took refuge in a cottage, surrounded by Gothic soldiers who, unaware of the identity of the man within, piled brushwood around the walls and set it on fire; by the time they realised the emperor was inside, it was too late.

Many historians see this moment as a landmark in the history of Rome, its military supremacy at an end.

A fourth-century coin of Valens. The Roman emperor and his army were defeated by the Goths

French soldiers brandishing bayonets during the First World War. On 22 August 1914, about 27,000 French troops lost their lives – the highest loss on any single day in the conflict

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The Chechen warlord Shamil Basayev at his base near Grozny, 1999

7 AUGUST 1999

Led by the warlord Shamil Basayev, **Islamist fighters cross the border from Chechnya into the Russian Republic of Dagestan**, provoking a massive Russian military counter-attack and triggering the Second Chechen War.

22 AUGUST 1914

The First World War's bloodiest day

A poorly planned gamble results in the slaughter of 27,000 French fighters

In Britain, few days in modern history have been more exhaustively chronicled than the opening day of the battle of the Somme, but it was not the bloodiest day of the First World War. That dubious honour belongs to Saturday 22 August 1914, when the flower of the French army was cut down during the clashes known as the "Battle of the Frontiers".

The war on the western front was just a few weeks old, and the fighting had yet to settle down into the attrition of the trenches. Both sets of combatants – the British, French and Belgians on one side, the Germans on the other – were eager to go onto the offensive. And while the Germans were scything through Belgium, following their infamous Schlieffen Plan, the French commander, Joseph Joffre, had a plan of his own.

Under Plan XVII, his men were supposed to drive across the border, through the Ardennes and into Germany's borderlands of Alsace and Lorraine, which France had lost a generation earlier. In French planners' minds, the cavalry would lead a dazzling charge, resplendent in their bright red-and-blue uniforms. They gave little thought to camouflage, let alone to the terrible new military technology the men would face, from machine guns to barbed wire.

The French rode east, sweat pouring beneath their gleaming helmets. On the horizon, through the heat haze, they made out the enemy lines, German soldiers poised behind their machine guns. "They look like something from a picture book," one of the Germans thought. On went the French – into the arms of death. As the German guns spat out their deadly rattle, French blood seeped into the soil. "Rain is falling," wrote one French sergeant, "shells are screaming and bursting ... Whenever it stops we hear the wounded crying from all over the woods. Two or three men go mad every day."

On a single Saturday, some 27,000 Frenchmen lost their lives, as well as an unknown number of Germans. It was the most lethal day in French military history.

The union flag, representing the kingdoms of England, Scotland, and Ireland

1 AUGUST 1800

In London, **George III gives the royal assent to a new Act of Union**, bringing together the realms of Great Britain and Ireland in a single United Kingdom. The act comes into effect on the first day of the following year.

Our illustration shows some of the devilish activities the three Samlesbury women were accused of in 1612 – ILLUSTRATION BY **SARAH YOUNG**

19 AUGUST 1612

The Samlesbury witch trials begin

Three women are accused of devilish deeds – but a wider conspiracy is soon revealed

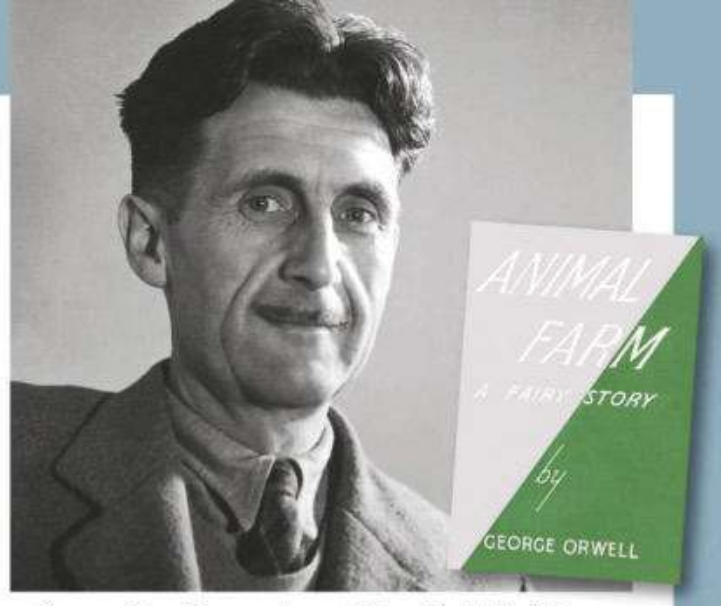
One of the most extraordinary trials in English history opened at Lancaster Castle on 19 August 1612. Three women from the village of Samlesbury – Jane Southworth, Jennet Bierley and Ellen Bierley – stood accused of "diverse devilish and wicked Arts, called Witchcrafts, Inchauntments, Charmes, and Sorceries, in and upon one Grace Sowerbutts". Listening closely was the clerk of the court, Thomas Potts, whose recollections formed the basis of his later account, *The Wonderfull Discoverie of Witches in the Countie of Lancaster*.

According to the 14-year-old Grace, the three women – among them her own aunt and grandmother – were nothing less than the tools of Satan. They had the power to change themselves into dogs, she said, and had long "haunted and vexed her". In addition, she claimed that they had held black Sabbaths with "foure black things, going upright, and yet not like men in the face", with whom they also had sex. What was more, the Samlesbury witches had stolen a baby and drunk its blood. Then, after the baby had been buried, they dug up the body, cooking and eating some of it and using the rest for a magical, shape-shifting body cream.

At this point, things looked grim for the three alleged witches. But under further questioning, Grace's story fell apart. She admitted that it was a pack of lies, claiming that she had been put up to it by Jane Southworth's uncle Christopher, a secret Jesuit priest. So what appeared to be a story about witchcraft was in fact a story about the wickedness of Catholicism – at least, as Potts understood it.

For the three Samlesbury women, the story ended happily. The judge ordered the jury to find them not guilty, and urged the women to "use this mercie and favour well". And thus, wrote Potts, "were these poore Innocent creatures, by the great care and paines of this honourable Judge, delivered from the danger of this Conspiracie; this bloudie practise of the Priest laid open".

GETTY IMAGES



George Orwell secured a publisher for *Animal Farm* only in 1945 (first-edition cover shown)

17 AUGUST 1945

Animal Farm finally reaches bookshelves

George Orwell's anti-Soviet text appears, having been passed over by top publishers

George Orwell's book *Animal Farm*, widely regarded as one of the 20th century's most powerful and effective political fables, was published by Secker and Warburg on 17 August 1945. But behind that anodyne fact lies a fascinating story.

Orwell wrote the book over the winter of 1943–44, while Britain and the Soviet Union were fighting together against Nazi Germany. Having seen Stalinism at first hand in the Spanish Civil War, he loathed Soviet communism and was determined to expose its cruel hypocrisy. Getting the book published, however, was more difficult than he expected.

When Orwell submitted the manuscript to Faber & Faber, the publisher's director, TS Eliot, turned it down, arguing that despite its "fundamental integrity", it was too loaded against communism. A second publisher also rejected it, prompting Orwell to lament in an article that, because of the war, it was "now next door to impossible to get anything overtly anti-Russian printed".

After more refusals, at last Frederic Warburg agreed to publish it, even though many of his own colleagues thought it foolhardy to be associated with something so critical of Britain's Soviet ally. His gamble paid off: by the 1950s, the CIA was said to be airdropping thousands of copies into Soviet-occupied eastern Europe. Its status as a satirical classic and moral touchstone was assured. H

Dominic Sandbrook's new series of history books for children, *Adventures in Time* (Particular Books), is available now

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WHY WE SHOULD REMEMBER...

Large-scale violence on **Direct Action Day** puts India firmly on the path to partition

BY **FAISAL DEVJI**

Seventy-five years ago, on the morning of 16 August 1946, crowds of Muslims made their way to a park in central Calcutta (now Kolkata). They were gathering to observe Direct Action Day, called nationwide by the All-India Muslim League to protest what it saw as the abandonment of India's Muslim minority by the British colonial government and the Hindu-dominated Indian National Congress. The general strike and rallies planned were intended to imitate Congress's tactics of mass protest but, while the day passed off peacefully elsewhere, in Calcutta large-scale violence broke out between Hindus and Muslims, resulting in thousands of deaths. These riots are seen as marking a turning point after which the country's partition into India and Pakistan became inevitable.

> **"These riots are seen as marking a turning point after which the partition of India became inevitable"**

Earlier in the year, a British Cabinet Mission hoping to secure a unified post-independence India had proposed a plan for a weak central government to serve as a meeting point for groups of provinces representing Hindu and Muslim majorities. When Congress backtracked on its support for the plan, the League's president, Muhammad Ali Jinnah, renounced constitutional methods and called for Direct Action Day.

Police disperse a mob attacking a Hindu temple in Calcutta (now Kolkata) during the violence of Direct Action Day, 1946. The protests were intended to be peaceful but descended into mass bloodshed

Recent scholarship has placed the killings in the context not of party politics or religion but war, famine and poverty. Calcutta hosted countless destitute migrants drawn by the promise of employment and food during the Bengal Famine, caused partly by the wartime requisition of grain, killing some 3 million in 1943. Thus the violence wasn't indiscriminate but a reaction to the need for food and housing, leading to the looting of shops and provisions, and attacks on companies seen to be denying jobs to people based on religion. The disorder prompted other, sometimes more serious riots elsewhere, including in neighbouring Bihar province.

Though not entirely unprecedented – the country had witnessed smaller riots during the 1930s – the violence of Direct Action Day made tangible for the first time the possibility of civil war, which was forestalled only by the country's hurried partition. This allowed Britain, as well as India and Pakistan, to present a more acceptable and self-congratulatory narrative about a peaceful transfer of power resulting in the successful achievement of independence. H

Faisal Devji is a professor of Indian history at the University of Oxford. His books include *Muslim Zion: Pakistan as a Political Idea* (Harvard, 2013)

HIDDEN HISTORIES

EMMA DABIRI explores lesser-known stories from our past

"William Cuffay's story is more relevant now than ever"

"Blackman" was how *The Times* sneeringly referred to him. Others were taken aback by his small stature. William Cuffay was 4ft 11ins and born with a deformed spine and shin bones. He was mild-mannered, already approaching old age when he first drew press attention. Yet the unassuming appearance of this leader of the London Chartists had little bearing on his fierce commitment to working-class rights or indeed his abilities as a rousing orator.

Born in 1788 in Chatham in Kent, Cuffay was the son of a formerly enslaved ship's cook from St Kitts and a white English woman. He was born at a time when black people in Britain were free but slavery was still an active institution in its colonies, and into a cultural climate in which black people were looked down upon. This was the reality for Cuffay, compounded by the deprivations experienced as a member of the English working class. He trained as a tailor, and developed a love of the trade that mirrored his intense dislike of both the aristocracy and industrialists.

By 1819, Cuffay had established himself in Soho, but in 1834 was unemployed. He had gone on strike with fellow tradesmen, demanding better hours and increased pay. When the strike collapsed, he was blacklisted for failing to promise not to join a trade union.

Cuffay went on to set up the Metropolitan Tailors' Charter Association and joined the London Chartists, a movement committed to establishing political rights for working people. Based on the People's Charter, it included six demands for reform – principally that every man over 21 should have the vote, at a time when scarcely a tenth had that right (and women were forbidden from voting entirely). By 1848, William was leader of the London branch.

Meanwhile, mounting tensions erupted on 4 November 1839, when thousands of Chartists gathered in Newport. As they asserted their demands, a violent confrontation with the police ensued. Twenty-two people lost their lives and 21 more were charged with high treason. Three prominent leaders were condemned to be hanged, drawn and quartered. Following a national petitioning campaign, to which Cuffay was central, the sentence was commuted to transportation to Australia for life.

The last major Chartist demonstration took place on Kennington Common in 1848, and Cuffay again played a key role. For this, he was arrested for conspiring to "levy war against the queen" and tried at the Old Bailey. The press continued to lampoon him, taking every chance to remind readers that he was a "Negro". *Punch* magazine ridiculed "that man of colour" married to a washerwoman, but Cuffay remained a poised and dignified figure.

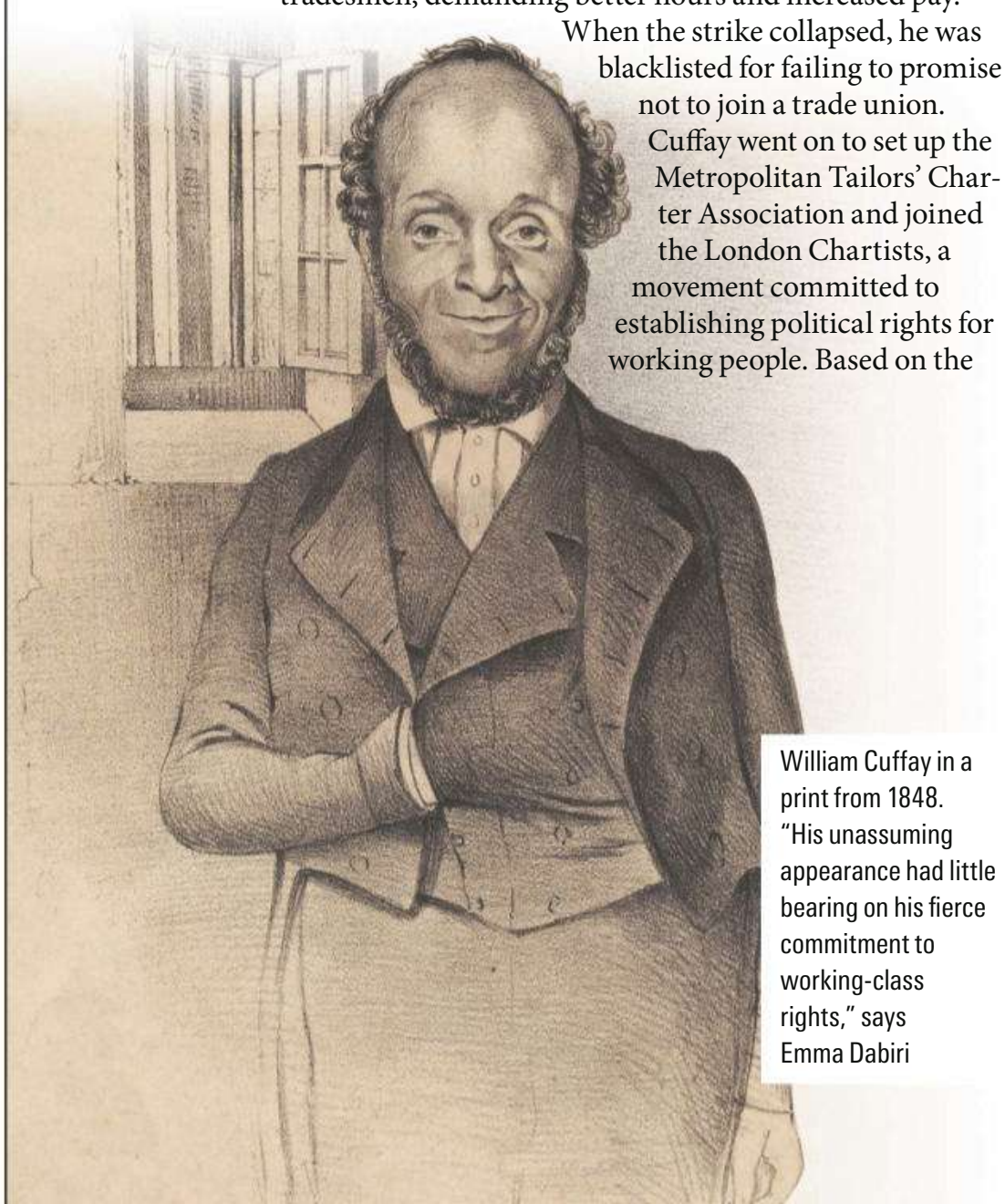
When he finally spoke he addressed the court with righteous contempt. "You have no right to sentence me," he said. "Although the trial has lasted a long time, it has not been a fair trial… Everything has been done to raise a prejudice against me, and the press of this country – and I believe of other countries too – has done all in its power to smother me with ridicule. I ask no pity. I ask no mercy…

"I always thought it would come to something like this. I am not anxious for martyrdom, but after what I have endured this week, I feel that I could bear any punishment proudly, even to the scaffold. This new Act of Parliament is disgraceful, and I am proud to be the first victim of it… Everything that was likely to do any good to the working classes was either thrown out or set aside, but a measure to restrain their liberties could be passed in a few hours. I have nothing more to say."

Cuffay and two comrades were sentenced to transportation for the "term of [their] natural lives". Although he received a pardon in 1856, Cuffay chose to stay in Tasmania where his wife had joined him. He was unique among exiled veteran Chartists in that he continued his radical agitation, and was active in the successful amendment of the colony's Masters and Servants Act, which improved the conditions endured by English, Irish and Scottish servants.

Cuffay died a pauper in 1870. His grave was marked "in case friendly sympathisers should hereafter desire to place a memorial stone on the spot". One-and-a-half centuries later, it is yet to be erected. Indeed, no memorials exist: not in London, Chatham or Tasmania. In the context of current global conversations about black lives, acknowledging the importance of the life of William Cuffay seems more timely now than ever. H

Emma Dabiri is an author and broadcaster, and teaching fellow at SOAS University of London. Her most recent book is *What White People Can Do Next: From Allyship to Coalition* (Penguin, 2021)



William Cuffay in a print from 1848. "His unassuming appearance had little bearing on his fierce commitment to working-class rights," says Emma Dabiri

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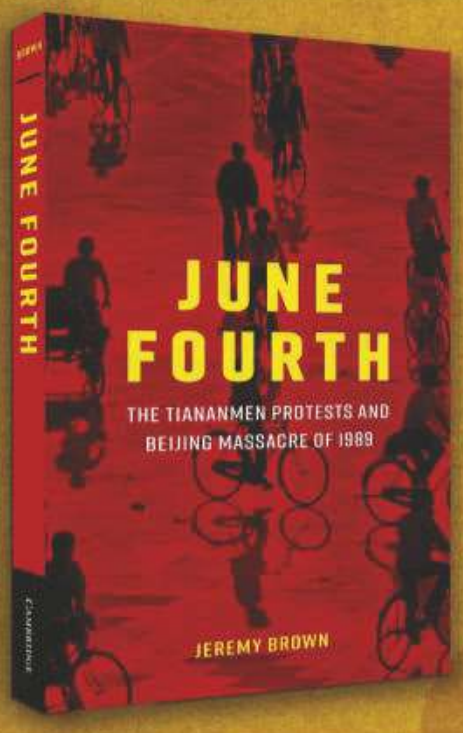
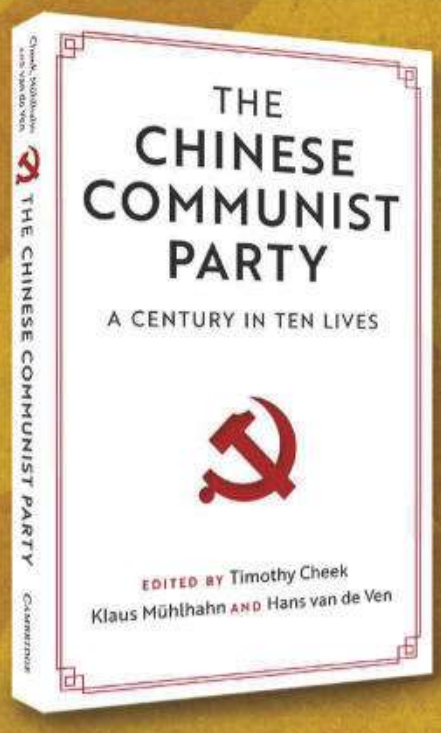
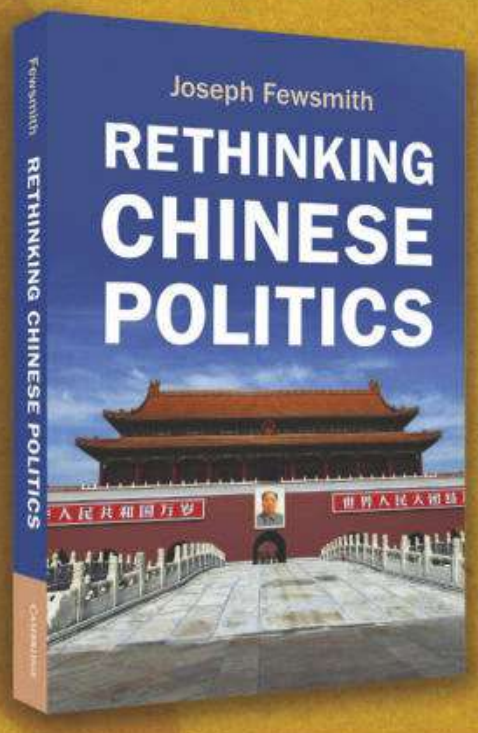
Chinese Communist Party
100th Anniversary Collection







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LETTERS

A 12th-century depiction of St Augustine (right). Imran Asim Hayat highlights his efforts in spreading Christianity

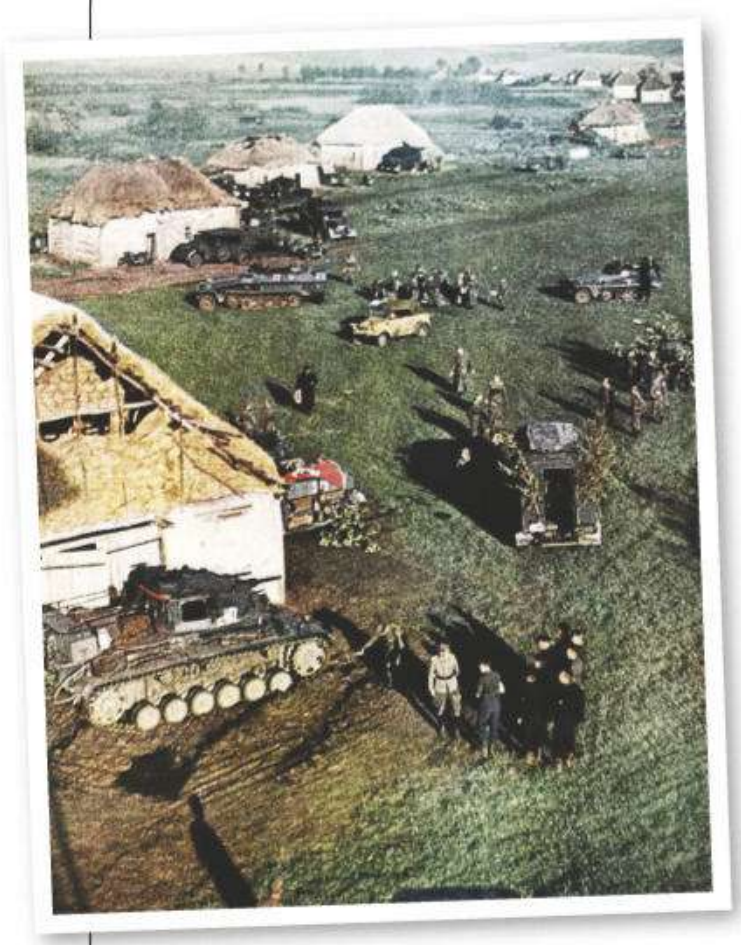
LETTER OF THE MONTH

Initial velocity

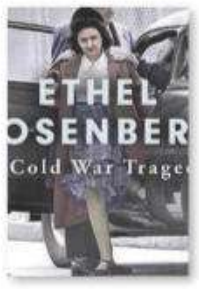
Your interview with Jonathan Dimbleby in the May issue (*Books*) reminded me that, when I worked in London in the 1960s, a colleague had a German friend who had been involved in the Second World War Barbarossa campaign. This friend had told my colleague that, when they attacked Russia, his unit first advanced 20, 30 or 40 miles a day. This went on for weeks. In the end, they paused and were called into the commandant's HQ for a briefing.

The commandant had a map of the whole of Russia spread out. He pointed at it and said: "We are here." It was at that moment that the German friend had a revelation about the scale of the operation: he saw in a flash that they had not yet even reached the "U" of "USSR"!

M Underwood, Birmingham



Troops gather at a village on the eastern front, 1942. Reader M Underwood recalls a story told by a participant in the German invasion of the Soviet Union



We reward the *Letter of the Month* writer with a copy of a new history book. This issue, that is **Ethel Rosenberg: A Cold War Tragedy** by Anne Sebba. You can read our review of the book on page 82

Breaking boundaries

Souvik Naha's article on cricket in colonial times (*Batting for the British Empire*, July) was interesting, but I think he missed the main point. Cricket is an entertaining game and has brought great happiness to all who have participated – and still does. Today, it is the lifeblood of the Indian subcontinent.

Of course, in colonial days superior and disparaging attitudes to native populations were widespread, but today we see these sentiments as embarrassing, if not absurd. The game itself, however, was so captivating that most countries have continued with it after colonial days and reached a high level of attainment, often outdoing its originators.

Interestingly only the US really rejected the game, but that was only after the heady, nationalistic days of the civil war. Until then, cricket was at least as popular as baseball.

Perhaps we should celebrate its diaspora throughout the commonwealth. The sheer pleasure of the game itself has sublimated all the condescending humbug that went with it.

Tony Pitman, Wiltshire

Auto correction

Thank you for the interesting article on the fortunes of Coventry's car industry (*Britain's Motor City*, June). It was fascinating to read about such now-quaint sounding brands as Hillman, Sunbeam, Riley and Standard – names familiar because, back then, I knew the names of virtually every car on the road!

However, I fear you may have made an error. You mentioned that the Rootes Group made a model called the Hunter Hawk. You may have confused this with the Humber Hawk. They did use the name "Hunter", but this was given to the Hillman brand, to replace the Minx in 1970. Although production of the Humber Hawk ceased in 1967, the Humber Sceptre was produced until 1976.

Douglas Bell, Manchester

Nuclear terror

I write in response to your piece on the Cuban Missile Crisis (July). I was 13 years old at the time, and well remember the fear and dread I felt as I read the leaflets explaining how to stay safe – my father was in the Civil Defence. I wondered when we should start whitewashing the windows, and sleep was difficult as I tried to plan how my parents, brother and I would live in the cupboard under the stairs, which was the only place without outside walls. The memory of this frightening time has stayed with me, and I still plan for worst-case scenarios.

Jennifer Kennedy, Cowbridge

Faith or force?

I found Marc Morris's article on the adoption of Christianity by the Anglo-Saxons (June) very interesting and a good read. However, I could not agree with his assessment of the overt use of violence used by Christians as being the primary force for Anglo-Saxons' conversion to Christianity.

It is true that at different points during this period there would have been wars and bloodshed between both factions, but these would have been the consequence of political aims and disagreements rather than religion being the prime purpose.

I believe that the peaceful and remarkable efforts of St Augustine and the monks of Lindisfarne should not be downplayed, and that Christianity was an overall positive force for these islands.

Imran Asim Hayat, Edinburgh

A significant sacrifice

I have only recently read the March issue (must be a Covid backlog). However, I found that I was unable to get past the first paragraph of the feature on the Western Front (*How the West was Won*). The piece lists the armies from major powers that fought in that arena, including the United Kingdom and United States. What upset me was the bracketed description of those other forces who supported the UK as "a host of minor powers and colonial possessions".

We have recently commemorated Anzac Day here in Australia and New Zealand, where we remember, among other losses, the Australian and New Zealand soldiers who fought for the Commonwealth in the First World War. With a population of fewer than 5 million, 400,000 enlisted in the Australian armed forces, of which more than 60,000 were killed and tens of thousands wounded, gassed, or taken prisoner. New Zealand suffered more, with the loss of the highest percentage of men among the British

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New Zealand infantrymen in France, 1918. Reader Laurelle Muir praises the contribution of Anzac troops

A 19th-century painting of the 1821 battle of Carabobo. Reader Graham Holden was disappointed that the 200th anniversary of the conflict was not marked in these pages

dominions. Other "colonial possessions" also made substantial contributions.

These statistics describe a huge sacrifice that deserves a little more acknowledgement than the condescending referral that our contributions received.

Laurelle Muir, Queensland

Missed anniversary

As with every other issue, I pounced on June's magazine when it landed on my doormat. In this case I was hoping to find a reference in the *Anniversaries* section to one of the most significant battles in the history of South America. I was disappointed, but not entirely surprised, to find that there was no mention of the battle of Carabobo, which had its 200th anniversary on 24 June 2021.

The battle saw Venezuelan Simón Bolívar's Patriots fight Spanish Royalists in an effort to gain independence from Spain. Bolivar's force of around 7,000–8,000, including about 350 Anglophone men of the British Rangers battalion, won the battle against 4,000-5,000 Spanish Royalists under the command of Miguel de la Torre. Bolívar's victory ultimately resulted in independence for Venezuela, and consolidated the formation of states in South America that were independent from Spanish colonial rule.

Graham Holden, Wirral

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BBC HISTORY MAGAZINE

EDITORIAL
Editor Rob Attar *robertattar@historyextra.com*
Deputy editor Matt Elton *mattelton@historyextra.com*
Production editor Spencer Mizen
Podcast editor Ellie Cawthorne
Subeditor Rhiannon Davies
Picture editor Samantha Nott *samnott@historyextra.com*
Group art editor Susanne Frank
Senior deputy art editor Rachel Dickens
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Fact-checkers: Dr Robert Blackmore, John Evans, Dr Fay Glinister, Abaigh McKee, Josette Reeves **Picture consultant:** Everett Sharp

ADVERTISING & MARKETING
Advertising manager
Sam Jones 0117 300 8145
Sam.Jones@immediate.co.uk
Senior brand sales executive
Sam Evanson 0117 300 8544
Brand sales executive
Sarah Luscombe 0117 300 8530
Sarah.Luscombe@immediate.co.uk
Group direct marketing manager
Laurence Robertson 00353 5787 57444
Subscriptions director Jacky Perales-Morris
Subscriptions marketing manager
Kevin Slaughter
US representative Kate Buckley
buckley@buckleypell.com

PRESS AND PUBLIC RELATIONS
PR manager Emma Cooney 0117 300 8507
Emma.Cooney@immediate.co.uk

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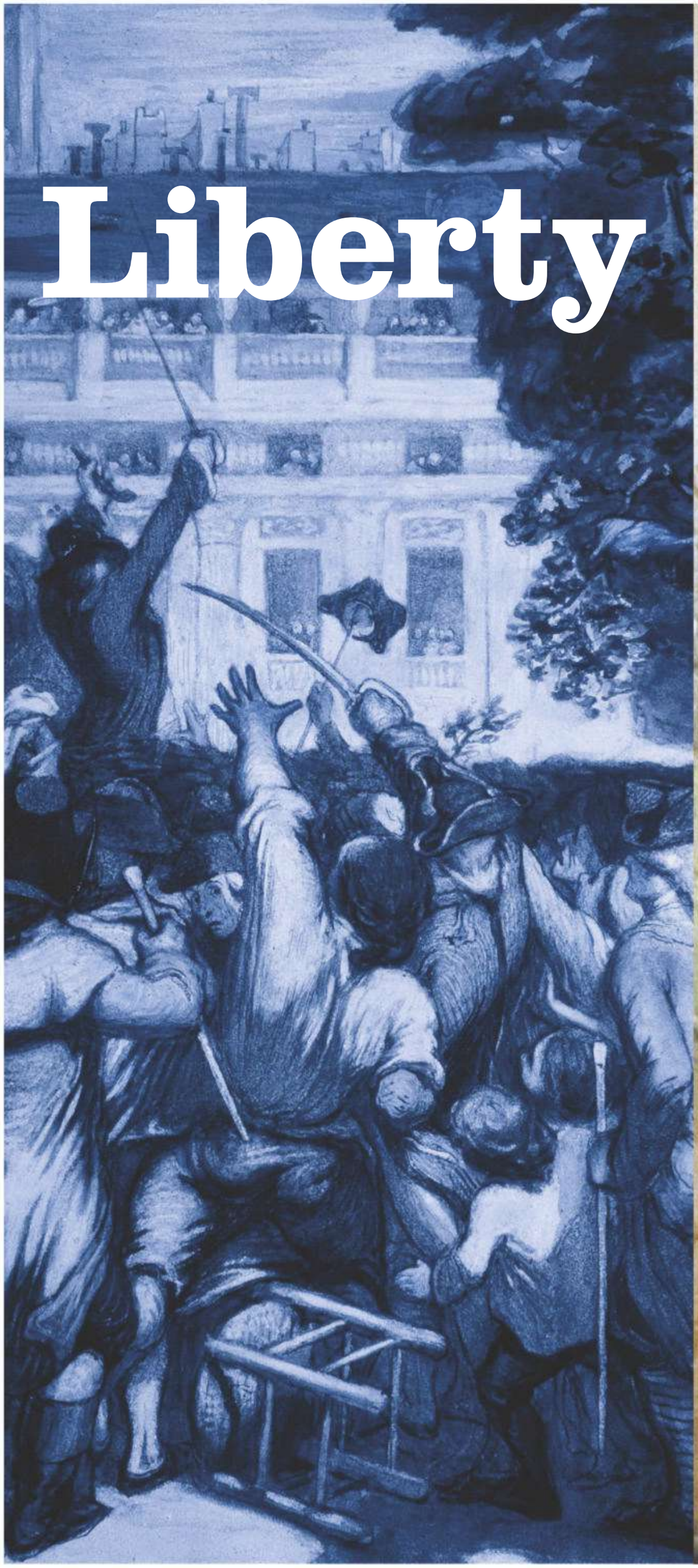
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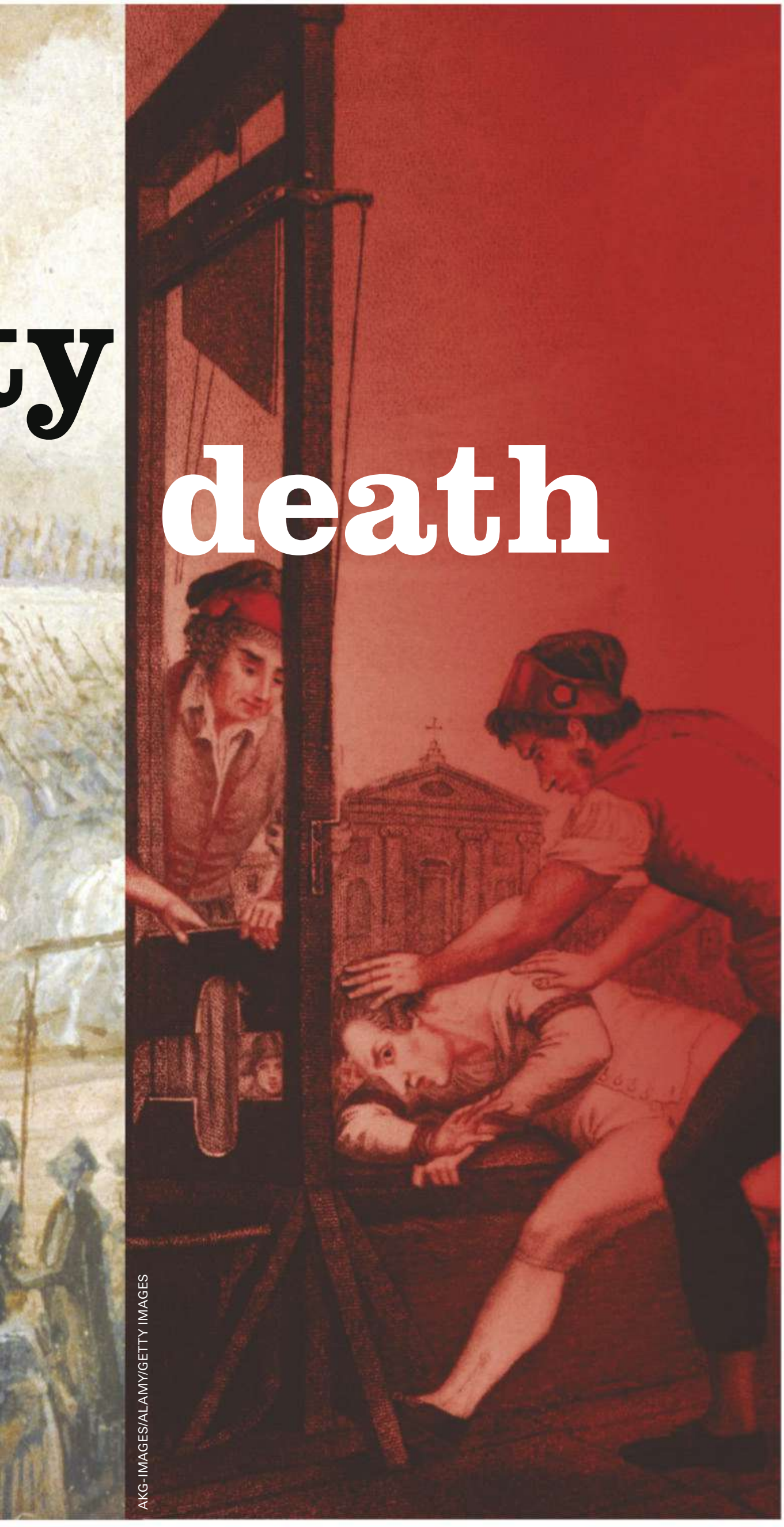

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The French Revolution was motivated by the ideals of freedom, equality and brotherhood, but would ultimately fall under the shadow of the guillotine. **Marisa Linton** traces the descent into terror

Baying for blood

LEFT: Camille Desmoulins (top left) exhorts Parisians to arm themselves for revolution in the gardens of the Palais Royal, July 1789
MIDDLE: Louis XVI is escorted back to Paris under arrest after attempting to flee France, June 1791. The revolutionaries sought equality for all, whether king or peasant
RIGHT: Maximilien Robespierre is guillotined on the orders of fellow revolutionary leaders fearing for their own lives, 28 July 1794

Family break-up
Camille and Lucile Desmoulins with their son, Horace. In 1794, both were sent to the guillotine by men who had attended their wedding

The end of the reign
A painting of the battle at the Tuileries Palace on 10 August 1792 that led to the fall of the French monarchy. As the revolutionaries' power increased, so did the factionalism that divided them

One fine day, late in 1790, a wedding was held at the church of Saint-Sulpice in the Parisian Latin Quarter. The groom, Camille Desmoulins, was a revolutionary journalist; his bride, Lucile Duplessis, a girl of 20 whom he had loved hopelessly for years, without prospect of having enough money to marry.

Among the 60 guests were many radical revolutionaries, all the groom's friends. Desmoulins told his father how many guests wept with joy, declaring himself "the happiest of men who desires nothing more in the world". Less than four years later, many of the people present at that wedding, including the bride and groom, had died under the guillotine, victims of a factional struggle that ripped through the leadership of a revolution that had begun in a spirit of liberty, equality – and fraternity.

The French Revolution began in June 1789, when the commoner deputies of the Estates-General, summoned to help absolute monarch Louis XVI solve impending state bankruptcy, swore to give France a constitution and form a national representative assembly. Amid fears that the king intended to use troops to crush the revolution, people in the capital rushed to arm themselves.

Camille Desmoulins, then a penniless lawyer, leapt onto a table in the gardens of the Palais Royal, waving two pistols, defying arrest, and haranguing the crowd to arm themselves in defence of their revolution. His words poured out, with no sign of the debilitating stammer that usually afflicted him. Soon after, on 14 July 1789, people of Paris rose up to storm the Bastille, the moment that defined the revolution. Desmoulins never tired of taking the credit for starting it all.

That first summer brought heady expectations that a new and better world was dawning, one based on principles of equality of rights, individual liberty, and universal brotherhood. "How I thank heaven that I was born at the end of this century!" wrote Desmoulins, "with what giant steps we are going towards liberty!"

Among the deputies of the new National Assembly was Maximilien Robespierre, a former schoolfellow of Desmoulins, and one of the official witnesses at Desmoulins' wedding. Like many revolutionaries, he had practised as a lawyer. He became known for his integrity and conviction; nicknamed "the Incorruptible", because he would not take bribes. Robespierre was part of a radical group who wanted the principles of equality to extend to all – including the poor, religious minorities, and slaves in the colonies. In May 1791, he tried, without success, to get the death penalty abolished.

A factional struggle ripped through the revolutionary leaders – condemning many of them to die under the guillotine

Many people, especially nobles and devout Catholics, objected to the way the revolution had overturned the old order. Some fled France to push for the revolution to be overturned by force. In June 1791, King Louis and his wife, Marie-Antoinette, fled Paris, attempting to join the foreign powers. The couple were intercepted near the border with the Austrian Netherlands and brought back to Paris where they were greeted in ominous silence by crowds who believed the king and queen were now enemies of the revolution.

The situation grew more volatile as people feared that a coalition of foreign powers, bitterly opposed to the revolution, would attack. Some demanded that France pre-empt the danger by declaring war. One of the chief spokesmen for the war lobby was Jacques-Pierre Brissot. He had been another friend to witness Desmoulins' marriage contract. War, said Brissot, would flush out the hidden enemies of the revolution – by which he meant the monarchy – and enable France to wage a "crusade for liberty" abroad.

Robespierre opposed this proposal, which

GETTY IMAGES

he argued would militarise the revolution and undermine it. He thought the idea that invading French soldiers would be welcomed by other countries was naïve. "No one welcomes armed missionaries," he observed. Brissot retaliated, attacking Robespierre as "unpatriotic" for shirking war. This disagreement sowed the seeds of divisions that deepened as the revolution moved into crisis.

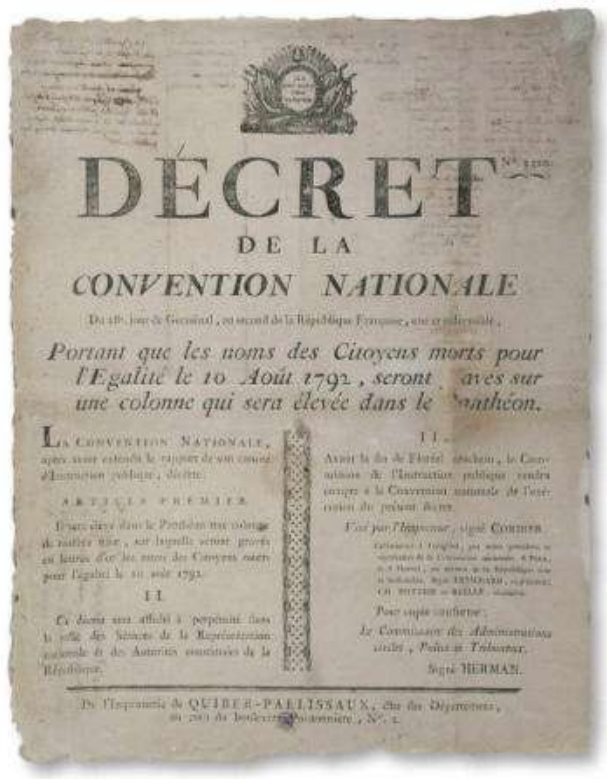
Most deputies agreed with Brissot, voting in favour of conflict. The declaration of war with Austria in April 1792 marked a downward spiral that escalated until France was at war with Prussia, Britain, Spain and the Dutch Republic. As Robespierre had predicted, the war went badly from the outset with French armies fighting defensively within France's territory. Secretly the king and queen welcomed the war, hoping that the French armies would be defeated.

Factional divisions

Against the backdrop of fear and anger the monarchy was overthrown on 10 August 1792 in a pitched battle at the Tuileries. A new assembly, the National Convention, met for the first time. France was now a republic.

Within the convention factional divisions that had begun over the war debates deepened into bitter antagonism. Many of the men who had been united in friendship and political goals at Desmoulins' wedding now took opposing sides. Ranged on one side were the Montagnards – including Robespierre, Desmoulins, and their mutual friend, Georges Danton, another lawyer. Opposed to

Rival camps
Factional divisions within the revolutionaries were inflamed by a disagreement between Maximilien Robespierre (top) and Jacques-Pierre Brissot over whether France should go to war


DÉCRET
DE LA
CONVENTION NATIONALE
Portant que les noms des Citoyens morts pour l'Egalité le 10 Août 1792, seront gravés sur une colonne qui sera élevée dans le Panthéon.

Honouring the fallen
A decree of France's new assembly, the National Convention, hails the citizens who lost their lives fighting "for equality" on 10 August 1792

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A timeline of Terror

Summer 1789 Fearing that Louis XVI is planning to crush moves to create a constitution, Parisians arm themselves. **The French Revolution begins.**

June 1791 **King Louis and his wife, Marie-Antoinette, flee Paris**, attempting to join foreign powers opposing the revolution. They are intercepted near the Austrian border (their arrest is shown right).

April 1792 **France declares war on Austria and Prussia.** Conflict with a coalition of foreign powers is the single most significant cause of the descent into terror.

10 August 1792 As fear of foreign invasion rises, the monarchy is overthrown. In September, a new assembly, **the National Convention, meets for the first time**.

21 January 1793 **King Louis XVI is executed**, following a heated debate about his fate in the National Convention.

March 1793 **A civil war** erupts in the Vendée. That same month, **a Revolutionary Tribunal is established** to deal with suspects accused of political crimes and treason.

1793 A dispute between two factions in the convention – the Girondins and the Montagnards – results in the **arrest, execution or suicide of most Girondin leaders.**

5 April 1794 **Camille Desmoulins and Georges Danton** – both leading figures of the revolution – are put to death after voicing their opposition to the Terror.

26 June 1794 French victory over a coalition of foreign armies at the **battle of Fleurus (shown below)** signals the beginning of the end of the Terror.

28 July 1794 **Maximilien Robespierre is guillotined** on the orders of fellow Montagnards.

1795 Members of **the National Convention are granted an amnesty** for actions they had taken during the Terror.

Final steps
Louis XVI is led to the scaffold on 21 January 1793. Robespierre had set aside his previous opposition to the death penalty, arguing that the king posed a grave threat to the republic

them were Brissot's group, the Girondins. The Montagnards accused the Girondins of having sold out to obtain ministerial posts. The Girondins accused the Montagnards of siding with the Parisian militants, the sans-culottes, who had taken a prominent part in the overthrow of the monarchy and who were now calling for terror measures to fight the war, and a crack down against counter-revolutionaries, and bankers and speculators who were exploiting the poor. In continuing to side with Parisian militancy, the Montagnards were riding the tiger of popular democracy in a volatile situation.

The decision on the fate of the king was another pivotal moment. The 721 deputies of the convention acted as a law court. Louis was found guilty, but the question remained as to whether he should be put to death – the proscribed penalty for treason, especially in time of war. The alternative would be to keep him imprisoned, or to banish him. Robespierre argued that, while he still opposed the death penalty in principle, these were not normal circumstances. Louis' existence was a danger to the republic, a rallying point for its enemies.

Voting continued through the night as spectators looked on, eating refreshments and drinking wine. One gravely ill deputy had himself carried in to vote. A deputy, Mercier (the third witness at Desmoulins' wedding, but now distancing himself from the radicals) described the process: "Face after face passed by… In slow and sepulchral tones voices recorded the verdict, 'Death!'"

The execution of the king, in January 1793, was the first time the guillotine had been used to despatch someone convicted of treason. They botched the execution: Louis moved, and the blade hit his head. Future executions would be streamlined, with victims strapped to a tilting plank that slid under the guillotine, with a bracket to hold the head in place so that the descending blade sliced unerringly through the neck.

March 1793 saw the start of a major revolt in the Vendée in western France, and an attempt by General Charles-François Dumouriez to overthrow the convention. Dumouriez's treason proved disastrous for the Girondins, who were tainted by association with him. The sans-culottes called for their arrest. The Girondins for their part attacked the Montagnards, attempting to have them sent before the new Revolutionary Tribunal, set up to judge political crimes.

"Let us be terrible," declared the leading revolutionary Georges Danton, "to spare the people from being so"

Rough justice

For all the deputies, including the Montagnards, it was vital not to let people take matters into their own hands to dispense impromptu "justice" on the streets without legal process. This had happened the previous September, when bands of Paris militants entered the prisons, butchering prisoners they deemed to be counter-revolutionary.

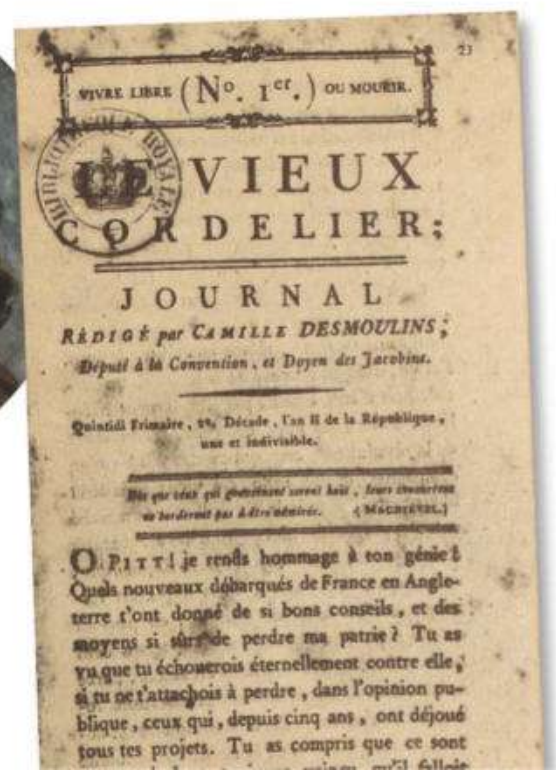
It was to avoid a repetition of these scenes that Danton called for the setting up of the Tribunal: "Let us be terrible," he said, "to spare the people from being so." Terror, as implemented by the convention, was a legal process. It was not a unified system of government, but an improvised, sometimes chaotic, response to a series of crises. Even men who, like Robespierre, had been against the death penalty, accepted that the need to preserve the republic came first. They quoted Cicero: "Public safety is the highest law."

Ironically, laws on terror weighed hard on

ALAMY/GETTY IMAGES/BRIDGEMAN/SHUTTERSTOCK

Waves of violence Priests and suspected insurgents are drowned in the Loire river at Nantes in 1793. The outbreak of a brutal civil war in the west of France only intensified revolutionaries' paranoia in Paris

Killing spree The leading Montagnard Jean-Paul Marat (left) lies stabbed to death in the bath, the victim of Charlotte Corday (above). Corday's attack sealed the fate of the Montagnards' great rivals, the Girondins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Rédigé par CAMILLE DESMOULINS;

Député à la Convention, et Doyen des Jacobins.

Quintidi Frimaire, 2e. Décade, l'an II de la République, une et indivisible.

O Pitt! je rends hommage à ton génie! Quels nouveaux débarqués de France en Angleterre t'ont donné de si bons conseils, et des moyens si sûrs de perdre ma patrie? Tu as vu que tu échouerois éternellement contre elle, si tu ne t'attachois à perdre, dans l'opinion publique, ceux qui, depuis cinq ans, ont déjoué tous tes projets. Tu as compris que ce sont

Fatal words Georges Danton (left) and Camille Desmoulins pushed back against the policy of terror in the newspaper, *Le Vieux Cordelier*. Their calls for clemency resulted in their own executions

revolutionary leaders themselves. They were expected to give examples of integrity and public service and were judged ruthlessly if they were seen to fall short, in a context in which mutual fear and suspicion made factional disputes increasingly bitter. Against the backdrop of continuing military crisis, full-scale civil war in the Vendée, and unrest on the streets, divisions escalated into a terror that began to play out within the convention itself. On the proposal of a Girondin, a vote was taken to remove parliamentary immunity. From that point on, deputies were vulnerable to arrest for having "suspect" opinions. Factional tensions rose to knife-edge. There were scuffles, and some deputies took to carrying weapons.

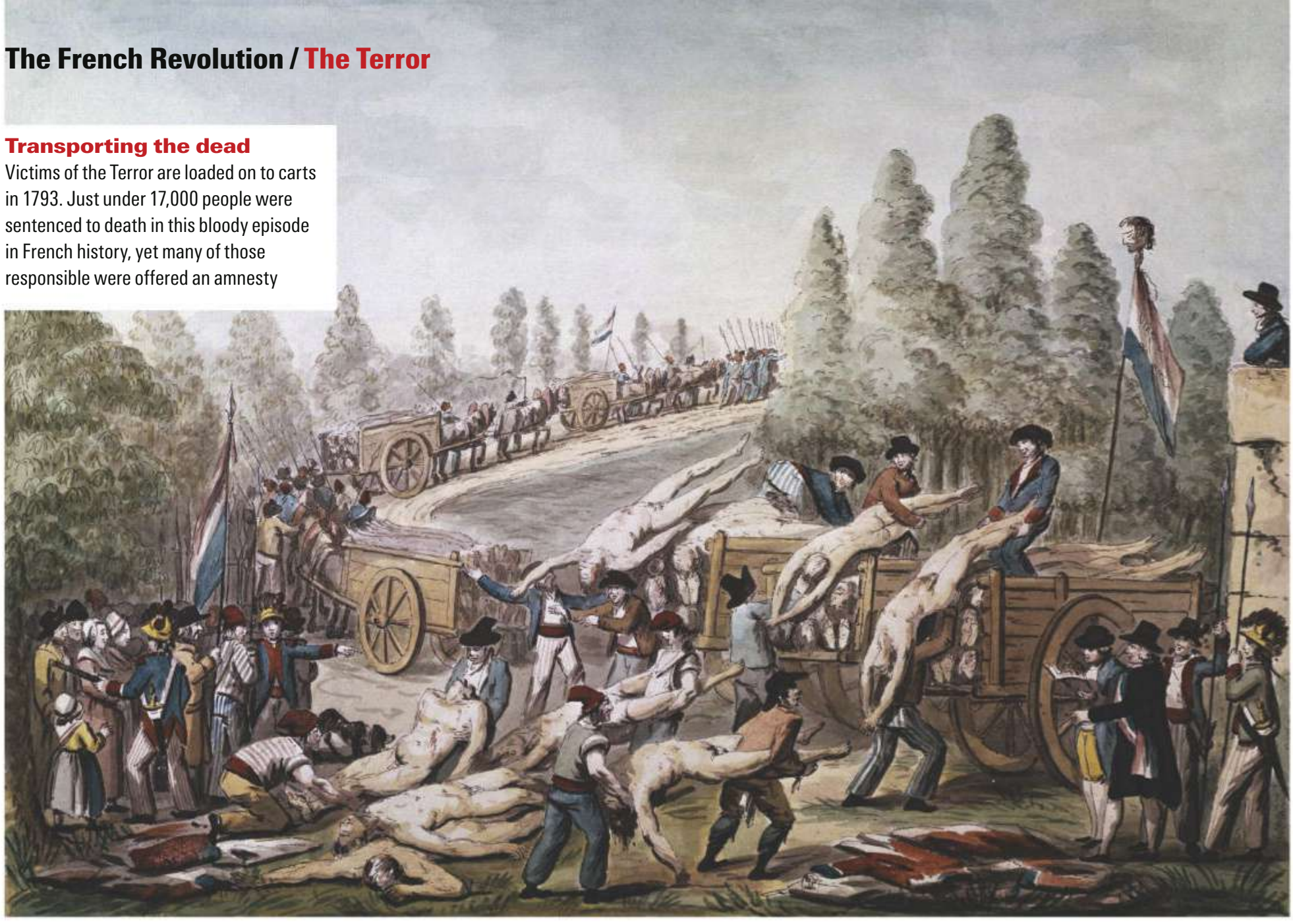
Desmoulins joined in the denunciation of his former friends. His pamphlet *Secret History of the Revolution* purported to be an exposé of the real motives behind the words and actions of the Girondins, accusing them of engaging in a conspiracy with the royalists to overturn the revolution. Massed crowds armed with cannon demanded, and obtained, the arrest of many leading Girondins.

Despite pressure from the sans-culottes, the deputies remained reluctant to proceed against the Girondins, and they might well have been reinstated had it not been for two things. The first was that some Girondins escaped and began to foment uprisings against the convention. The other event that sealed their fate was when Charlotte Corday (a previously unknown Girondins-sympathiser) bluffed her way into the home of a leading Montagnard, Jean-Paul Marat, and stabbed him in his bath with a kitchen knife. The Montagnards assumed that leading Girondins were behind the assassination. Corday's action had made deputies more fearful, and thus more ruthless.

Courtroom drama

That autumn the leading Girondins were indicted. As they were sentenced to death, one stabbed himself in the dock. Seven of the guests at Desmoulins' wedding were among the condemned. Desmoulins collapsed in the public gallery, screaming that it was his own pamphlet that was killing them.

Though both Desmoulins and Danton had been implicated in supporting terror, they now joined forces to push for clemency. Desmoulins started a newspaper, *Le Vieux Cordelier*, in which he spoke up against the policy of terror: "You want to exterminate all your enemies by means of the guillotine! Has there ever been such great folly? Can you make a single man perish on the scaffold, without making 10 enemies for yourself from his family or his friends?"



Transporting the dead
Victims of the Terror are loaded on to carts in 1793. Just under 17,000 people were sentenced to death in this bloody episode in French history, yet many of those responsible were offered an amnesty

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Up to a point Robespierre seems to have sympathised, but he put the unity of revolutionary government before loyalty to his friends. He joined forces with the rest of the committee to have Danton, Desmoulins and others arrested and sent before the Revolutionary Tribunal. Desmoulins wrote a last letter to his wife. "I had dreamed of a republic that the whole world adored. I could not have believed that men were capable of being so ferocious and so unjust." Lucile never received it. She was already under arrest herself for having tried to organise protests against her husband's treatment.

Eighty-six deputies either died under the guillotine or killed themselves to pre-empt public execution. Nearly a third of deputies experienced arrest, sometimes for many months. One deputy recalled: "The terror was more deadly towards the friends of liberty than towards its enemies."

Overall, just under 17,000 people were sentenced to death in what is now known as the Terror. The great majority of those executed were put to death under a law that called for those found guilty of taking up arms to fight against the revolution to be subject to death within 24 hours. They were condemned by military commissions or provincial tribunals that were most active in areas of conflict, in parts of western France, and on the frontiers where there was war with the foreign powers. Tens of thousands more died in the brutal civil war in the Vendée.

As for the Revolutionary Tribunal, it sent 2,639 defendants to the guillotine. In most cases brought before the tribunal, people had some chance to mount a legal defence. Overall, just over half the accused were condemned to death.

It took a French victory over a coalition army at the battle of Fleurus (in modern-day Belgium) in June 1794 for the arrests, the trials and the executions to relent. Terror was no longer viewed as a necessary tool to save France from foreign invasion.

But the killing wasn't over quite yet. In July 1794, Maximilien Robespierre was overthrown by fellow Montagnards terrified that he was seeking their arrest. He and 107 of his adherents went to the guillotine.

The men who contrived Robespierre's fall wasted no time in falsely claiming that he and his supporters had been acting alone in "masterminding" terror. In doing so, they conveniently ignored the fact that the laws enabling terror had been voted for by the convention as a whole.

One of the last acts of the National Convention before it disbanded in October 1795 was to distance its members from the killings further still by offering them an amnesty for actions they had taken in a time of terror. And so Robespierre was forced to carry the can for the events of 1792–94. But he was far from the only one with blood on his hands. H

Marisa Linton's latest book, *Terror: The French Revolution and its Demons*, co-written with Michel Biard, will be published by Polity Press in November. She recently discussed the revolution on our podcast: *historyextra.com/podcast*

"The terror was more deadly towards the friends of liberty than towards its enemies," recalled one deputy

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Lucy Worsley investigated the French Revolution in an episode of her BBC Two series **Royal History's Biggest Fibs**. You'll find that on the BBC iPlayer: *bbc.co.uk/iplayer*

» Turn to page 32 to read our feature on the impact of the French Revolution on 18th and early 19th-century Britain

The progressive revolution

The events of 1789–94 shouldn't be defined solely by Terror, writes Marisa Linton. Here are 10 ways in which the revolution advanced the causes of liberty, fraternity and equality

1 It gave us the *Declaration of the Rights of Man and of the Citizen* (issued by the new National Assembly in August 1789). This set of **principles** (on which the revolutionaries would base the new constitution) included: liberty of the individual, equality of rights and opportunity, national sovereignty, freedom of religious belief, freedom of speech, and freedom of political opinion.

2 It triggered the introduction of **religious freedoms**. In December 1789, Protestants received civil rights; in September 1791, Jews were given full civil rights.

3 On 4 August 1789 the system of **privileges**, whereby one person had special rights or exemptions to which another was not entitled, was brought to an end. This included tax exemptions for the nobility.

DÉCLARATION
DES DROITS DE L'HOMME
ET DU CITOYEN,
Décrétés par l'Assemblée Nationale dans les séances des 20, 21, 23, 24 et 26 août 1789,
acceptés par le Roi
PRÉAMBULE
LES représentans du peuple Francois constitués en assemblée nationale, considérant que l'ignorance, l'oubli ou le mépris des droits de l'homme sont les seules causes des malheurs publics et de la corruption des gouvernemens, ont résolu d'exposer dans une déclaration solemnelle, les droits naturels, inaliénables et sacrés de l'homme; afin que cette déclaration, constamment présente à tous les membres du corps social, leur rappelle sans cesse leurs droits et leurs devoirs; afin que les actes du pouvoir législatif et ceux du pouvoir exécutif, pouvant être à chaque instant comparés avec le but de toute institution politique, en soient plus respectés; afin que les reclamations des citoyens, fondées désormais sur des principes simples et incontestables, tournent toujours au maintien de la constitution et du bonheur de tous.
EN conséquence, l'assemblée nationale reconnoit et déclare, en presence et sous les auspices de l'Etre suprême les droits suivans de l'homme et du citoyen.
ARTICLE PREMIER.
LES hommes naissent et demeurent libres et égaux en droits; les distinctions sociales ne peuvent être fondées que sur l'utilité commune.
II.
LE but de toute association politique est la conservation des droits naturels et imprescriptibles de l'homme; ces droits sont la liberté, la propriété, la sureté, et la résistance à l'oppression.
III.
LE principe de toute souveraineté réside essentiellement dans la nation, nul corps, nul individu ne peut exercer d'autorité qui n'en émane expressément.
IV.
LA liberté consiste à pouvoir faire tout ce qui ne nuit pas à autrui. Ainsi, l'exercice des droits naturels de chaque homme, n'a de bornes que celles qui assurent aux autres membres de la société la jouissance de ces mêmes droits; ces bornes ne peuvent être déterminées que par la loi.
V.
LA loi n'a le droit de défendre que les actions nuisibles à la société. Tout ce qui n'est pas défendu par la loi ne peut être empêché, et nul ne peut être contraint à faire ce qu'elle n'ordonne pas.
VI.
LA loi est l'expression de la volonté générale. tous les citoyens ont droit de concourir personnellement, ou par leurs représentans, à sa formation; elle doit être la même pour tous, soit qu'elle protege, soit qu'elle punisse. Tous les citoyens étant égaux à ses yeux, sont également admissibles à toutes dignités, places et emplois publics, selon leur capacité, et sans autres distinction que celles de leurs vertus et de leurs talens.
VII.
NUL homme ne peut être accusé, arrêté ni détenu que dans les cas déterminés par la loi, et selon les formes qu'elle a prescrites. ceux qui sollicitent, expédient, exécutent ou font exécuter des ordres arbitraires, doivent être punis; mais tout citoyen appelé ou saisi en vertu de la loi, doit obéir à l'instant, il se rend coupable par la résistance.
VIII.
LA loi ne doit établir que des peines strictement et évidemment nécessaire, et nul ne peut être puni qu'en vertu d'une loi établie et promulguée antérieurement au délit, et légalement appliquée.
IX.
TOUT homme étant présumé innocent jusqu'à ce qu'il ait été déclaré coupable, s'il est jugé indispensable de l'arrêter, toute rigueur qui ne serait pas nécessaire pour s'assurer de sa personne doit être sévérement réprimée par la loi.
X.
NUL ne doit être inquiété pour ses opinions, mêmes religieuses pourvu que leur manifestation ne trouble pas l'ordre public établi par la loi.
XI.
LA libre communication des pensées et des opinions est un des droits les plus precieux de l'homme: tout citoyen peut donc parler, écrire, imprimer librement, sauf à répondre de l'abus de cette liberté dans les cas déterminés par la loi.
XII.
LA garantie des droits de l'homme et du citoyen nécessite une force publique: cette force est donc instituée pour l'avantage de tous, et non pour l'utilité particuliere de ceux à qui elle est confiée.
XIII.
POUR l'entretien de la force publique, et pour les dépenses d'administration, une contribution commune est indispensable, elle doit être également répartie entre les citoyens en raison de leurs facultées.
XIV.
LES citoyens ont le droit de constater par eux-même ou par leurs représentans, la nécessité de la contribution publique, de la consentir librement, d'en suivre l'emploi, et d'en déterminer la quotité, l'assiette, le recouvrement et la durée.
XV.
LA société a le droit de demander compte à tout agent public de son administration.
XVI.
TOUTE société, dans laquelle la garantie des droits n'est pas assurée, ni les séparation des pouvoirs déterminée, n'a point de constitution.
XVII.
LES propriétés étant un droit inviolable et sacré, nul ne peut en être privé, si ce n'est lorsque la nécessité publique, légalement constatée, l'exige evidemment, et sous la condition d'une juste et préalable indemnité.
AUX REPRESENTANS DU PEUPLE FRANCOIS

4 It gave active citizens (ones who met tax criteria) **the right to vote**. Then, with the overthrow of the monarchy, the distinction between active and passive citizens was abolished, giving suffrage to all male citizens.

5 All citizens (active and passive) were given equal rights to **justice** and protection under the law.

6 In June 1790, in line with the ending of hereditary privilege, **noble status** was abolished.

7 **Women** were given many social and legal rights based on principles of equality. New inheritance laws stated that all children of a marriage, irrespective of gender, should inherit equally after the death of the parents. Women and men were given equal access to divorce on simple grounds of incompatibility, making divorce a civil matter, easy and accessible. Women actively participated in some political clubs and made their voices heard.

8 The revolutionaries decreed an immediate end to **slavery** on 4 February 1794. Napoleon Bonaparte later forcibly reinstated slavery in those territories France still held – though not in Saint-Domingue, which preserved a liberty that former slaves fought for and kept.

9 **Torture** was made illegal. Though the death penalty was retained, the guillotine was introduced to make the death penalty less inhumane than protracted executions under the Old Regime.

10 The constitution of 1791 decriminalised **homosexual acts** – in line with principles of individual liberty.

A new high for humanity?
Jean-Jacques-François Le Barbier's painting portrays the *Declaration of the Rights of Man and the Citizen* – issued by the French National Constituent Assembly in August 1789 – as the crowning glory of the French Revolution

SHOCKWAVES OF R

Ian Mortimer outlines 11 ways that the French Revolution influenced Britain, from decades of intense warfare to becoming a sanctuary for chess fanatics

DREAMSTIME/BRIDGEMAN

EVOLUTION

The radical Thomas Paine holds the *Rights of Man* in this 1792 cartoon. Many hoped the French Revolution would herald political changes in Britain

1 Reform appears on the horizon

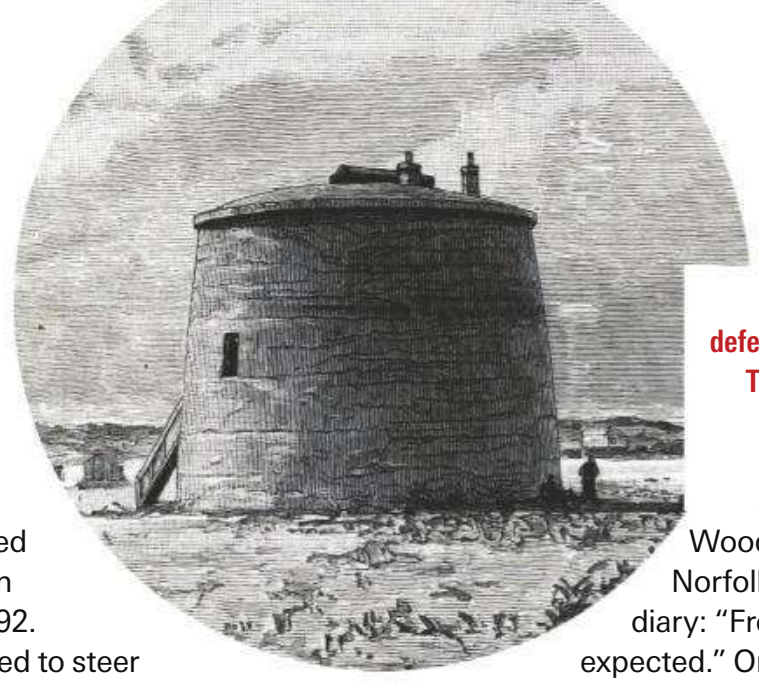
When reports of the early stages of the French Revolution reached Britain in May 1789, the news was welcomed by many different sorts of people. Whig politicians, idealistic middle-class reformers and working-class agitators all saw reasons to believe that constitutional change in France was an indicator of a wider spirit of reform. Organisations that had been calling for the extension of the parliamentary franchise in Britain for some years, such as the Society for Constitutional Information, were inspired to take up their old struggle with renewed vigour. Corresponding societies were newly founded in London, Norwich, Manchester and other large towns with the aim of giving ordinary people representation in parliament. "Annual parliaments and universal suffrage" was the call of the London Corresponding Society.

Gradually, however, as events in France unfolded, first with the deposition of the monarch in 1792 and then the execution of the king and Marie-Antoinette the following year, the optimism dissipated. With the advent of the Terror, people were forced to reassess their views. Those of a moderate disposition distanced themselves from revolutionary ideals. Diehard reformers found themselves on the back foot as the government arrested several key campaigners who wanted to see a French-style Convention in Britain. Nevertheless, although it was many years before parliament finally agreed to reform, the revolution never ceased to be an inspiration to those seeking political change in Britain.

2 Britain goes to war

The leaders of the French Revolution initially disassociated themselves from warfare. They decreed in their constitution: "The French nation renounces the undertaking of any war with a view of making conquests, and it will never use its forces against the liberty of any people." Yet their ideology soon brought them into conflict with other European nations, including Britain.

Leopold II, the Holy Roman Emperor and Archduke of Austria – and the brother of the French queen, Marie Antoinette – joined with the king of Prussia in declaring that "they regard the actual situation of his majesty the king of France as a matter of communal interest for all sovereigns of Europe… [and] are determined to act promptly and unanimously, with the forces necessary for realising the proposed and communal goal". This threatened to upset the revolution, whose leaders increasingly considered preserving their achievements by military means. War was popular among the French people too, especially after a French army defeated an Austrian-Prussian force at Valmy in 1792.



The construction of defences such as Martello Towers (as in Pevensey Bay, left) was sparked by fears of invasion

Britain initially tried to steer clear of the conflict but was drawn in after the execution of Louis XVI and a threatened invasion of the Dutch Republic. The French responded by conscripting a massive army of 700,000 men and waging war across the continent. For 21 of the next 22 years, Britain was at war with the French, until the final victory over Napoleon at Waterloo in 1815. The conflict had a huge impact on Britain's finances, the employment of men, the size of the navy and its developing empire. It also led to widespread invasion fears among ordinary English people.

On 1 April 1798, the Reverend James Woodforde in rural Norfolk noted in his diary: "French invasion daily expected." On the 23rd of that month he wrote: "A great meeting at Reepham today, respecting all people arming themselves against an invasion of this country from the French." The building of 74 small round forts (Martello Towers) around the south coast still testifies to this apprehension.

Even the demilitarisation in 1815 had its social impact, as hundreds of thousands of soldiers and mariners became unemployed. Rarely had warfare featured so prominently in British everyday life for such a long period of time. It was no coincidence that some of the most famous men of the age were military heroes, notably Nelson and Wellington.

A painting of the 1819 Peterloo Massacre, when military policing was responsible for several deaths. Most landowners were against a civilian police force

3 Fears run high about the police

A deep fear among Britons that their nation might experience a French-style revolution meant that most people with property supported the government's harsh repression of any radical elements. This included infiltrating the corresponding societies, locking up suspects without charge, executing the ringleaders of demonstrations and forcefully dispersing disruptive assemblies. The repression reached new heights in the 1810s, when economic depression, unprecedented population growth and harvest failure all combined to make workers' lives a misery.

At the same time, fears that a civilian police force would support a revolution and implement a French "Committee of Public Safety"-style Terror in Britain meant that most landed people were against police forces. Thus soldiers had to be deployed to break up the March of the Blanketeers and the Pentrich Rising in 1817. Military policing was also responsible for the tragic end to the peaceful assembly in Manchester in August 1819, now known as the Peterloo Massacre.

Professional civilian police forces were established in Glasgow in 1800 and Edinburgh in 1805, but it was not until 1829 that the Metropolitan Police Act was passed, setting up a professional force for London. The Met's constables were unarmed and wore blue uniforms, in contrast to the red of the military.

MARY EVANS/ALAMY

4 The rich are hit with a tax hike

The prime minister, William Pitt the Younger, was an adventurous man when it came to taxation. His plan in the 1780s was to run a budget surplus to reduce the national debt incurred during the American War of Independence. However, just as he was beginning to think he might have cracked it, the French Revolutionary Wars gave him a whole new set of challenges.

The particular problem he faced was how to raise enough money to fight another war against a massive conscripted army, on land and at sea, without unduly taxing the less well-off. After all, if you were struggling to make ends meet, you may well have thought that a British revolution was preferable to being taxed heavily to fight the French.

So Pitt decided to tax those luxuries that were principally the preserve of the wealthy – for instance, coats of arms, manservants, hair powder and racing horses. Such was the cost of the war, however, that this was not enough.

Therefore in 1797 Pitt declared he would greatly increase taxation on the wealthy, trebling or quadrupling the amounts due from the middling sort and *quintupling* the sums payable by the richest members of society. He also introduced income tax for the first time in British history. The starting rate was 1/120th on incomes of £60, rising to 1/10 on those of £200 or more. Unsurprisingly, it proved no more popular in the wake of the French Revolution than it is today.

"Cease rude Boreas blustering railer,
Trust your Fortune care to me.
I have read many crabbed things in the course of my time – but this for an easy piece of Business is the toughest to understand I ever met with.
TAX upon INCOME
INCOME TAX
DAY BOOK
LEDGER
JOURNAL

William Pitt the Younger introduced income tax, as satirised in this late 18th-century cartoon featuring a bemused John Bull

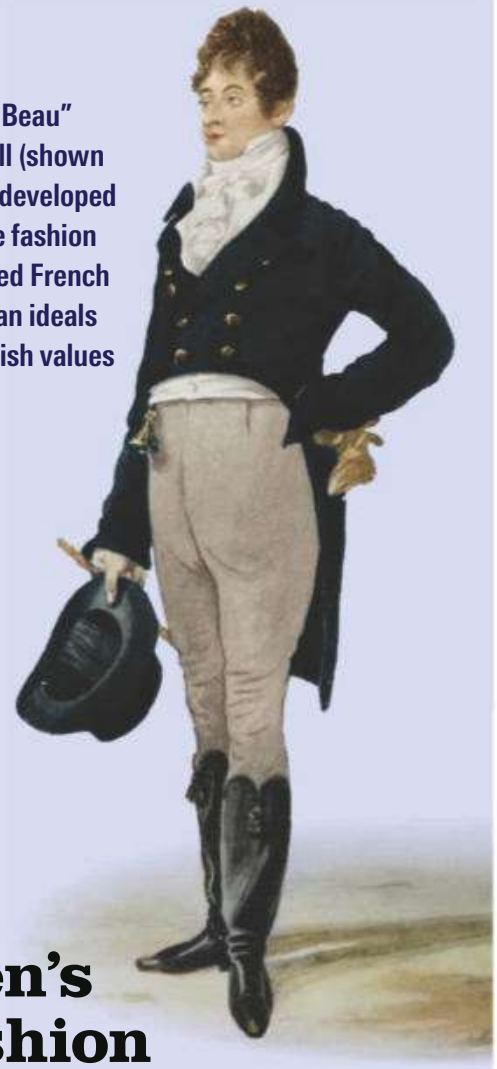
5 The concept of progress comes into being

In 1795 Sophie de Condorcet – the widow of the Marquis de Condorcet (below), one of the intellectual leaders of the French Revolution – published her husband's essay on progress, translated into English under the title *Outlines of an Historical View of the Progress of the Human Mind*. In this the author showed how mankind had progressed through 10 epochs. For example, the third epoch saw our "progress" from the age of farming to the invention of writing.

However, it was Condorcet's discussion of the 10th epoch – "the future progress of mankind" – that had he greatest impact in Britain. He argued that, on the basis of seeing how people behaved in past epochs, we could establish the laws of human nature as fully as we can the laws of physics, and thus predict the future "almost with certainty". In his view, it was inevitable that one day there would be female equality, an end to slavery, the establishment of a system of national insurance to pay pensions, the destruction of inequality between nations and the improvement of the whole human race.

The concept of progress has circulated in society ever since – whether in terms of the "march" of progress, the notion of "not standing in the way of progress", or the assumption that things will continue to get better.

GETTY IMAGES/ALAMY



George "Beau" Brummell (shown in 1805) developed a sombre fashion that suited French republican ideals and English values

6 Men's fashion is reinvented

Throughout history, men and women had used dazzling clothing to denote their status. Lavish materials, bright colours, jewels, wigs, hair powder and extravagant and impractical designs were all worn to show how wealthy and rich they were, and how little manual work they needed to do. Then came the French Revolution. Gentlemen suddenly had to look as though they were men of action and resolve – and nothing like the despised aristocracy, either in style or substance. Parisian fashion changed overnight, with the result that men adopted a much more practical, military form of dress, with trousers in place of breeches and stockings.

In England, the young George "Beau" Brummell, a friend of the Prince of Wales, picked up on this change. He realised this fashion had much in common with many traditional English values, such as modesty and self-restraint. He thus developed a style that was entirely new and unshowy. A gentleman, he insisted, should be fastidiously clean, slim and elegant. His clothes should be admired for their perfection of cut and fit. They should be made up of subtle, muted shades: a pair of buff pantaloons or trousers, a plain-coloured waistcoat, a dark-coloured coat. In short, men should show their worth through their attention to detail, their knowledge and their deeds – and not simply drape themselves in symbols of wealth. The result was the "Great Male Renunciation", in which men turned their backs on bright clothes and started to wear sober suits.

7 Classical clothes make a comeback

For women, the French Revolution proved just as much of a watershed as it did for men. After all, it wasn't exactly a great idea to dress in lavish clothes and have your hair styled exotically, with a 4ft feather on top, while your cousins on the other side of the Channel were getting their heads lopped off on account of such behaviour.

The Parisian women who set the fashion agenda for Europe came up with the solution. They took inspiration from ancient Greece and Rome and, in particular, the thin dresses to be seen on classical sculptures. These "democratic" styles were cut from muslin and remained popular in Britain as well as France for decades (pictured left: a woman wears a simple dress and shawl in a 1798 image). Women loved them because they allowed freedom of movement at the same time as allowing them to show a range of intricate designs and embroideries. Many men loved them just as much because they were thin and revealing of the wearer's figure.

At the same time, the lavish hairdos of the 1780s were replaced with democratic Greek and Roman hairstyles, allowing fashionable women to wear their hair short for the first time in many centuries.

The French playwright Olympe de Gouges in 1784. She fervently championed equality between the sexes, inspiring several key English writers

8 Women campaign for equality

Since the 16th century women had published books claiming that they were not inferior – and were in fact potentially superior – to men. Men, however, tended not to read them. But with the French Revolution, things took a more egalitarian turn. After all, why should "equality" not apply between the sexes as much as it did between men?

The Marquis de Condorcet certainly thought so, asking why the rights of citizenship were afforded to many men who were significantly less capable and intelligent than the brightest women, who were denied such rights. He brilliantly ridiculed the notion that women were inferior "as they have not produced any truly great artists or scientists": as he put it, by that logic most men should not have had the vote either, only great artists and scientists. And the female playwright Olympe de Gouges declared "woman is born free and remains equal to man in rights. Social distinctions may only be based on common utility," echoing the first article of the *Declaration of the Rights of Man and of the Citizen,* adopted in 1789 by the revolutionary government.

In England, the idea of improving women's status caught on with several key writers, most notably Mary Wollstonecraft, the author of *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman* (1792). Slowly things began to change, not least in respect of the education of girls whose fathers did not want them to grow up disadvantaged and disempowered, and subservient to less well-educated men. It was a long time before there were tangible benefits that had the force of law, but the roots of 19th-century reform lay in the discussions of what the "equality" of the French Revolution really meant.

Two Englishmen play chess in this 1814 image. London became the game's new centre as a result of the revolution

9 London becomes a chess haven

Many intellectuals and influential people were forced to come to Britain as they fell foul of the revolutionary governments in France. In a fashionable place like Brighton, you might have been waited on at a table by an émigré French aristocrat, who had escaped only with his life. One refugee was the greatest chess player of the age, François-André Philidor.

Before his rise to fame, the centre of the chess world was in northern Italy. With Philidor it shifted to Paris but, in 1792, he was forced to flee France. He settled permanently in London, and the centre of the chess world followed him again, remaining in London after his death in 1795.

Several chess clubs were founded, and the leading English and Scottish experts played matches by correspondence with their adversaries in other countries. This provided the high-level game that brought William Lewis to the fore. He not only became the leading player of the early 19th century but was also the first man to be described as a "grand master".

GETTY IMAGES/BRIDGEMAN

Keen to rival France's collection of art, in 1824 Britain established a National Gallery in London. This was its first home, in a house on Pall Mall

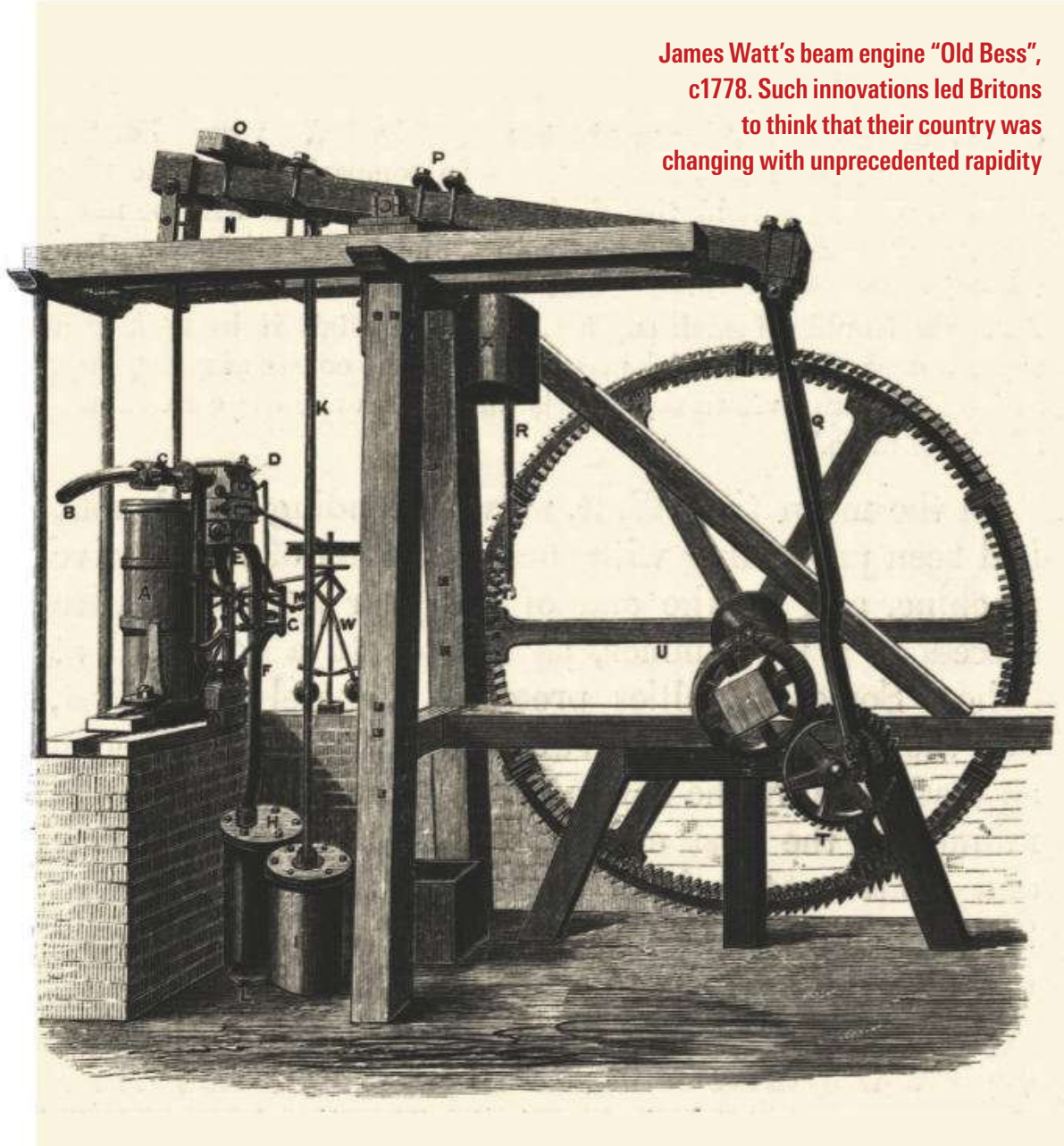
10 Public art takes centre stage

When the French royal family fell from grace, the old royal palace of the Louvre was confiscated by the revolutionary government. So too was the royal art collection. The Louvre then opened as a public museum in August 1793. Thus France had a "national gallery" long before Britain. This raised a few questions in itself. As the British establishment saw it, those low-born unruly revolutionaries had something of international pride that the superior, disciplined, law-abiding British did not. It didn't seem right. When the Louvre was further enhanced by Napoleon and given prize exhibits from his conquests around Europe, there seemed to be an even stronger linkage between a great international power and its public art.

Other nations started to follow the French example. Various important collectors such as Sir George Beaumont tried to impress on the British government the need for the United Kingdom to have its own cultural showcase. As it happened, a collection assembled to provide the basis of Poland's national gallery was in Britain and no longer required – due to the third partition of Poland and the abdication of the king in 1795. However, this was given to Dulwich College and became part of Dulwich Picture Gallery.

Thus it was not until the death of wealthy insurance broker and art collector John Julius Angerstein that the British government finally acquired a major collection and a building in which to display it, supplemented with works donated by Sir George Beaumont. The National Gallery opened to the public in Angerstein's house on Pall Mall in May 1824. Admittance cost a shilling.

GETTY IMAGES/ALAMY



James Watt's beam engine "Old Bess", c1778. Such innovations led Britons to think that their country was changing with unprecedented rapidity

11 Britons believe the nation is changing faster than ever

In 1803, the poet Robert Southey stated: "Perhaps no kingdom ever experienced so great a change in so short a course of years without some violent state convulsion as England has done during the present reign." Among the changes he pointed to in support of this statement were taxes, canals, internal communications, the steam-engine, manufacturing, the spirit of commerce, colonies gained in the east, the loss of America, and "the dress and manners of every rank of society". But note that Southey allowed that countries which had undergone a "violent state convulsion" might have experienced even greater transformation than Britain.

Obviously, he was referring to France, and perhaps thinking too of the Norman invasion or the fall of the Roman empire. But the key point is that people did not think like this before the French Revolution. In 1780 well-informed British people might think they had seen a lot of change in the last 50 years but nowhere near as much as their predecessors in the 50 years before 1680, or in the 50 years before 1580, or the 50 years before 1380.

Thus the French Revolution marked a watershed in the awareness of social change in Britain as on the continent. No one writing in the early 19th century would suggest that any earlier age had seen as much change as they had. The feeling that life was not just different but changing faster than ever before is one that has subsequently become common. Rightly or wrongly, most people since the French Revolution have believed that their generation has seen more change than any other. H

Ian Mortimer is a historian and author. His newest book is *The Time Traveller's Guide to Regency Britain* (Bodley Head, 2020)

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equality
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BBC HISTORY MAGAZINE

Gulielma Lister
Queen of slime moulds

At a time when scientific discovery was seen primarily as a male pursuit, Gulielma Lister became the world's leading expert on the otherworldly creatures nicknamed "living creepies" – which are today at the forefront of AI technology. **PATRICIA FARA** reveals how the pioneering scientist made her name

Being dubbed "the queen of slime moulds" might seem a dubious accolade, but Gulielma Lister (1860–1949) was the world expert on these extraordinary organisms that are now at the cutting edge of research into artificial intelligence – their trial-and-error decision-making processes are informing solutions for networking problems, for example. Not animals, plants nor fungi, slime moulds can creep around to explore their neighbourhood and track down food. One of them is the star attraction at a Paris zoo, where it is nicknamed *le blob* after the American horror movie. (In a quirk of serendipity, Alfred Hitchcock, the director of numerous other famous American horror films, lived for many years in the same road as Lister.)

We treat the soil beneath our feet as dirt, yet in a single teaspoon, there are more micro-organisms than all the people on earth. However tiny, they are crucial for maintaining a healthy planet – it is just as important to preserve them as it is to save the giant panda. Lister was an early environmentalist who dedicated her career to documenting hundreds of different slime moulds, as well as recording the rate at which once-familiar plants were disappearing from her native Essex as a result of rapid urbanisation and environmental pollution.

Quietly refusing to be deterred by the obstacles stacked up against women, this enterprising scientist initially worked with her father, Arthur, but after his death she became an international authority in her own right. She participated in an extended network of biologists stationed around the world, many of them women who were marginalised at the time and have now been forgotten. Among her most prized possessions was a gift of two enamelled vases presented by a fellow enthusiast, Emperor Hirohito of Japan, to express his gratitude for naming a specimen after him.

> "Gulielma Lister was definitely not a stereotypical stay-at-home spinster, instead travelling the world to study rare specimens"

For almost 90 years, Lister lived where she had been born, in the house in Leytonstone (now in east London) bought by her parents in 1857, a year after the railway station opened. Apart from a year at Bedford College, she was educated at home. Her mother, Susanna, was an artist who taught Gulielma to become an accomplished scientific illustrator. Her father commuted into London for his day job as a wine merchant, but he also constructed a scientific laboratory inside their comfortable suburban home where he could indulge his true passion. Father and daughter worked there together on slime moulds – what Arthur called "his living creepies".

Unorthodox globetrotter

However close she remained to her roots, Gulielma Lister was definitely not a stereotypical stay-at-home spinster. Succeeding in botany entailed being a hardy traveller. In a typically casual aside, she remarked: "I remember seeing in Switzerland, high on the Alps, the white sporangia of that hardy species *Diderma niveum* clustered on the slender stalk of a blue *Soldanella* flower which had just pierced through the snow."

Only 16 when she first went to Europe with her family, throughout her life she regularly visited museum curators on the continent, travelling to Paris, Strasbourg, Christiana and Leyden. She even accompanied her uncle Joseph – the surgeon famous for revolutionising surgery with antisepsis – on a trip to Canada and the West Indies. She had adored him since childhood, when he behaved "like a boy among us at the big family gatherings, throwing himself with whole-hearted enjoyment into all the games, however childish, that we played".

Joseph later became Lord Lister of Lyme Regis, where he spent the summers with Gulielma, other relatives and friends in a large house perched high up on the cliffs. Famous for its fossils and blessed with abundant wildlife, Lyme Regis was a paradise for Victorian naturalists. Gulielma spent days on end walking the headlands, watching birds and analysing geological features. Inseparable from her pocket telescope, she was much respected by the local residents (although one did cattily describe her as "a horsey sort of man").

Rather than indulging in relaxed holidays, the family worked hard at their shared fascination with the living world, even inventing a new expression to describe their constant activity: "ruggling on". Arthur set up a second laboratory packed with equipment for them to study mosses, fungi, lichens – and, of course, slime moulds.

ILLUSTRATION BY **RACHEL DICKENS**

ALAMY/GETTY/LYME REGIS MUSEUM

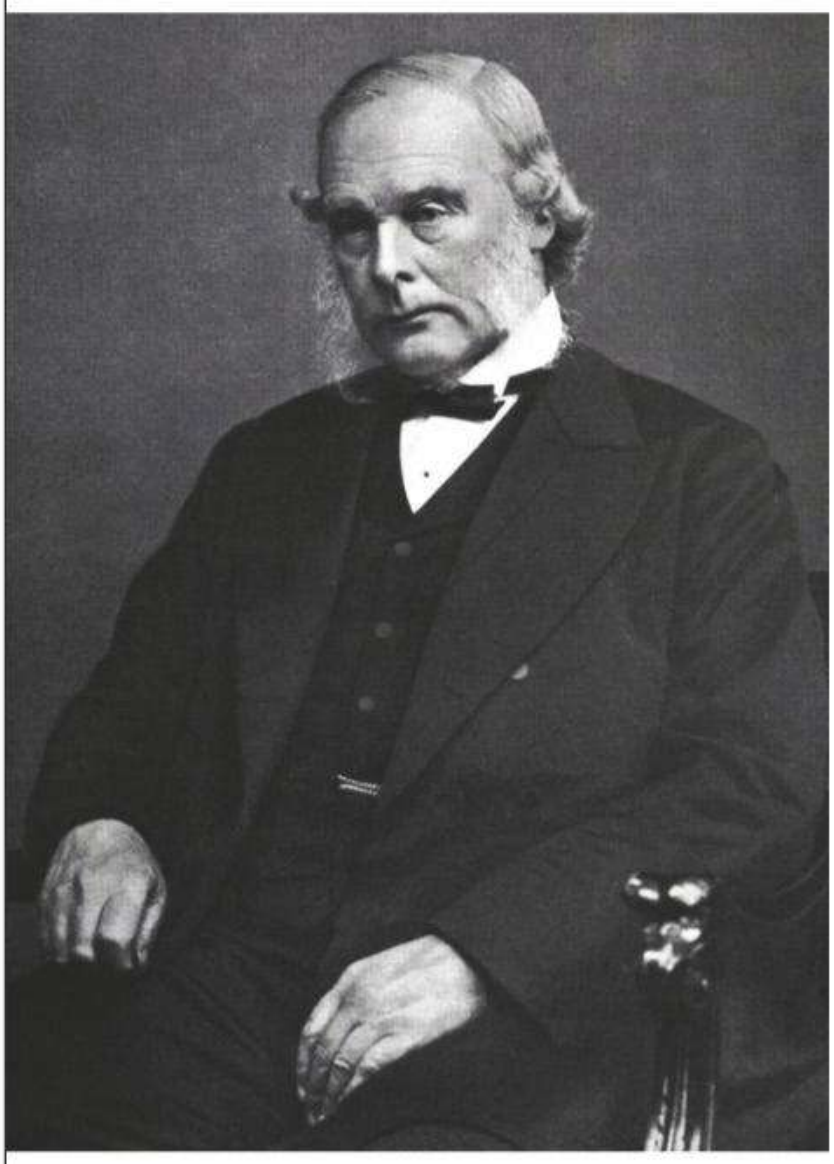
High Cliff House resembled a small scientific colony, whose regular visitors included eminent biologists such as Dukinfield Henry Scott.

Like Gulielma, Scott's wife Henderina had been encouraged into science by her father, and she too is a forgotten trailblazer. She pioneered the art of time-lapse photography, a technique now essential in work revealing the puzzle-solving abilities of slow-moving slime moulds. As she put it: "After a warm rain we often say that we can almost see our plants growing; by means of this adaptation of the cinematograph we literally can."

Runs in the family

If women could choose when to be born, many would pick tomorrow – but in the 19th century, belonging to a devout Quaker family was the next best option. Addressing each other as "thee" and "thou", the Listers enabled their intelligent daughters to enjoy far more opportunities than other affluent girls. "Quaker science" sounds like an oxymoron. Surely science is science, whatever your religion? But there are many ways of knowing the world, and many ways of exploring it. Rejecting what they perceived as the sterile objectivity of maths and physics, Quakers believed that it was more important to appreciate the wonder and diversity of God's creation. Their scholarly standards were as high as those in the universities from which they were long banned due to their faith, but their methods and goals were different.

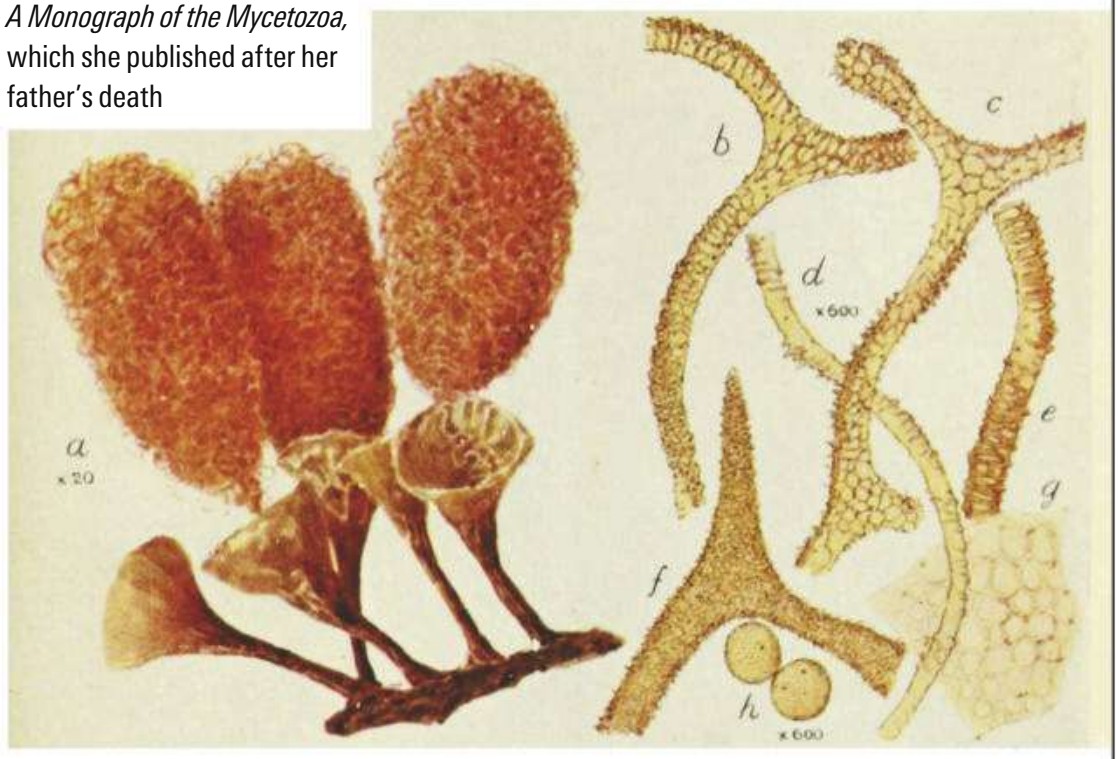
Gulielma's grandfather and father were both fellows of the Royal Society, and both famous for using high-powered microscopes that made it possible to study minute beings such as slime moulds. Although women were excluded until 1945, other scientific organisations were forced into being more broad-minded. After years of bitter argument and procrastination, in 1905 the Linnean Society eventually admitted 25 women – and Gulielma Lister was among them. Determined to justify their decision, she participated energetically, serving on the council and even being



Trailblazing surgeon Joseph Lister, c1900. His niece, Gulielma, adored him, travelling with him to Canada and the West Indies and visiting him at Lyme Regis every summer, where she studied local fauna and flora

Gulielma at Sycamore House, London, c1930. She never moved out of her childhood home, although the pursuit of science often led her to travel abroad

Illustrations of slime moulds drawn by Gulielma. These featured in a later edition of *A Monograph of the Mycetozoa,* which she published after her father's death



elected vice-president in 1929. As a ground-breaking role model, she was much admired and emulated by younger women, one of whom recalled that she "removed her hat in deference to the sexless character of a Fellow. It was an unusual thing then for a lady to remove her hat, but we all took our cue from Miss Lister and did the same."

Independently wealthy, Lister could afford to pursue a scientific career, and for many years she was effectively a senior but unsalaried curator at the Natural History Museum and Kew Gardens. Other women were less fortunate. Her best friend, Annie Lorrain Smith, endured great hardship despite being an international authority on fungi and lichens. Her book remained the standard reference work for decades, yet as Lister remarked angrily in her friend's obituary, she was marginalised as an underpaid "unofficial worker" throughout her long career at the museum.

> "For many years Lister was effectively a senior but unsalaried curator at the Natural History Museum"

For specialists around the world, Arthur Lister's comprehensive study of slime moulds provided the first systematic guide. But behind the scenes, he had relied on his invisible research assistant, the woman who had prepared many of the drawings and helped him to catalogue the specimens they worked on together. After he died, Gulielma stepped out of the shadows and published more detailed editions, embellishing them with beautifully coloured plates that she paid for or produced herself – and this time her name appeared on the title page as well.

Despite lacking a brain, *le blob* and its relatives can make decisions, navigate mazes and even remember where they found their last meal; they are the inspiration behind computer programs that search outer space and design transport systems. Gulielma Lister's slime moulds are forcing scientists to rethink what it means to think. H

Patricia Fara is based at the University of Cambridge and is a historian of science. Her books include *A Lab of One's Own: Science and Suffrage in the First World War* (OUP, 2018)

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Pitiless gaze Oliver Cromwell stares down on St Ives market square in Cambridgeshire. He "undoubtedly believed that the glory of God was best served by winning the maximum glory for himself", writes Ronald Hutton

The dark truth about Oliver Cromwell

The victor of the Civil Wars described himself as pious, honest and selfless. But, as all too many victims of his lies and malice would have attested, the reality was often more sinister

BY **RONALD HUTTON**

ALAMY

Historical trends may ebb and flow but Oliver Cromwell never goes out of fashion. This brilliant general and statesman has proved a source of enormous fascination to generations of historians – and, more than 350 years after his death, that interest shows no sign of dimming. There can be few, if any, heads of the English state who have been studied as often and intensely as Cromwell. In the past three decades alone, he has been the subject of five full-length biographies, three studies of his career as a soldier, and a further three major collections of essays. Piled around these are numerous books and articles dissecting every episode of his remarkable career – from the causes of his radical Puritanism to his role in the execution of King Charles I.

Given Cromwell's unique importance to English history, this tidal wave of words is hardly surprising. After all, his is the story of a sensational rise from obscurity to supreme power, of a soldier who never lost a full-scale battle, of the only English commoner to become the sovereign authority in the nation.

Cromwell's pre-eminence is reflected in the statue that stands at the entrance of the House of Commons, and the fact that he has more streets named after him than anybody other than Queen Victoria and (perhaps) the Duke of Wellington. In 2002, a BBC poll voted him the tenth greatest Briton of all time, ahead of all monarchs except Elizabeth I.

Cromwell's tremendous stature is not, however, the whole reason for the intense and sustained attention paid to him by historians. That has been propelled also by an uneasy feeling that the man himself is still eluding us. There is a disturbing chasm between Cromwell as he represented himself – as an honest, pious, patriotic, dutiful and selfless servant of his God and his nation – and as most of contemporaries saw him. Those, including many who knew him well, found him to be ruthless, devious and self-promoting, with a track record of abandoning or overthrowing people, ideas and institutions to which he had previously professed loyalty. So how have historians attempted to bridge the chasm between how Cromwell described himself, and how he was viewed by the people around him?

"Historians' continuing fascination with Oliver Cromwell is partly the product of an uneasy feeling that the man himself is still eluding us

Over the past 150 years, Cromwell's biographers have largely discounted the criticisms and condemnation. This is chiefly because they have taken him at his own estimation, treating that vast body of his surviving words as direct access to the workings of his mind. It is beguilingly easy to use his letters and speeches as the scaffolding on which to hang a biography.

Over the past two decades experts have become more aware of this problem, but a solution is difficult to reach because of the complexity of the events in which Cromwell took part and the great quantity of records, and of conflicting and unreliable testimony, that they have generated. Matching Cromwell's representation of events against these sources is a seriously daunting task.

My first published work on Cromwell appeared in 1990 and, over the following two and a half decades, I turned over in my mind possible solutions to the problem. The one on which I settled for my new biography on Cromwell was to deal with his little-known early life and the first part of his public career, up to the end of the first phase of the Civil War in 1646. This is a span of time with a volume of material that could be treated in detail within a book of normal size.

The project confirmed to me that Cromwell had been a person of remarkable talents and great virtues. He was a superb military leader – efficient and charismatic – who inspired fervent loyalty in his soldiers because he made sure that they were paid and supplied and gave them a sense of common participation in a divinely ordained cause. He was also a fine parliamentarian, speaking effectively and persuasively, working well with political allies and winning the sympathy of a large number of fellow MPs. In both spheres, he consistently showed a remarkable aptitude for learning on the job, and remained unwaveringly committed to parliament's cause in the Civil War, even in times of reverse and possible defeat.

Cromwell certainly enjoyed considerable good luck: in possessing a robust physical constitution; supporting the right politics at the right moment; escaping serious injury in military action; and receiving particular strokes of fortune that rescued his career's upward trajectory whenever it seemed likely to falter. In each case, however, he made the most of his opportunities.

Cromwell's passionate, Puritan religiosity was certainly genuine, and his conversion to it the defining experience of his life. It also made his career, linking him to a national and regional network of fellow believers, which got him into the Long Parliament (so called because it ran from 1640–60) and gave him a reliable group of political and military allies there. His attachment to the radical wing of Puritans – who loathed clerical power and wanted freedom

GETTY IMAGES/BRIDGEMAN

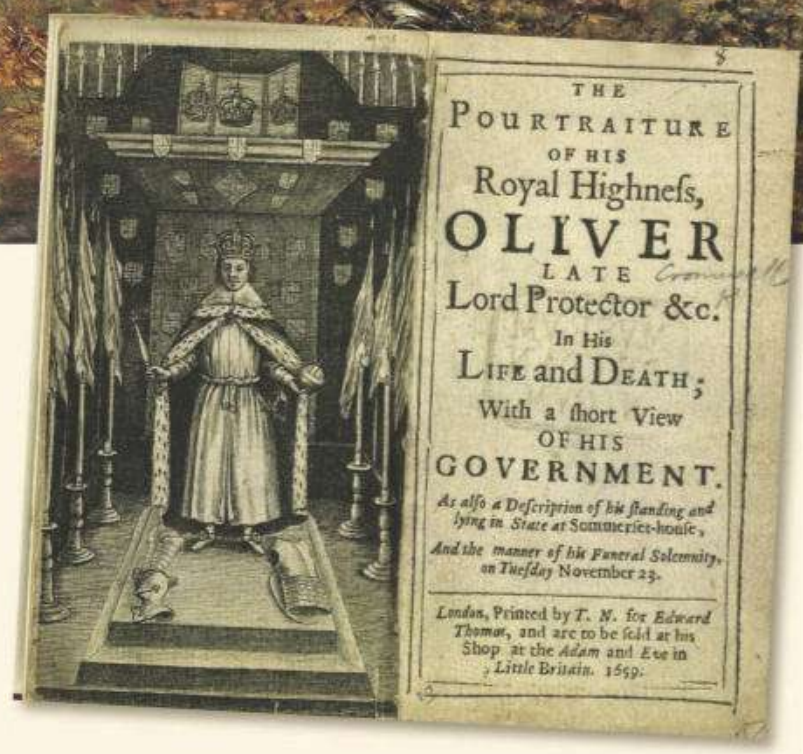
Vindictive nature
Cromwell shown at the head of his troops after the battle of Marston Moor in an early 20th-century painting. By routinely demonising his enemies, Cromwell legitimised the massacre of royalists that followed this parliamentarian victory

for groups who wished to worship outside the national church – sprang from deep conviction but served up a practical dividend: it provided him with a following that his birth and wealth were not sufficient to attract.

All this is quite familiar to scholars of the period, but my research also revealed less attractive – and less often noticed – aspects of Cromwell's personality. One is his relentless pursuit of self-promotion. He grabbed the attention of the Long Parliament, almost as soon as it was elected, by speaking on behalf of the famous radical Puritan John Lilburne, who had been imprisoned by the royal government. Cromwell had never met the man, but that didn't prevent him from using his misfortune as an opportunity to further his career.

Gaining recognition for his military prowess proved more of a challenge for Cromwell because his actions were for a long time minor, local and far from the capital. He solved it by securing the attention of supportive journalists who trumpeted his achievements nationally. We do not know if Cromwell briefed them himself or had a friend or follower do the job for him but the result was always the same: magnifying his contribution to military successes over that of his fellow commanders.

The taking of the towns of Lowestoft in March 1643 and Crowland the following month, and a clash at Belton in Lincolnshire on 13 May 1643, are all examples of actions in which Cromwell monopolised the credit for what were, in fact, team efforts. It was Norfolk dragoons who entered and subdued Lowestoft – but that didn't stop every newspaper crediting the victory to Cromwell, one saying he had taken it in a "hot charge". The first achievement of Cromwell's regiment – quashing an attempted royalist uprising at St Albans in January 1643 – became


THE
POURTRAITURE
OF HIS
Royal Highneſs,
OLIVER
LATE
Lord Protector &c.
In His
LIFE and DEATH;
With a ſhort View
OF HIS
GOVERNMENT.
As alſo a Deſcription of his ſtanding and lying in State at Somerſet-houſe,
And the manner of his Funeral Solemnity, on Tueſday November 23.
London, Printed by T. N. for Edward Thomas, and are to be ſold at his Shop at the Adam and Eve in Little Britain. 1659.

Positive spin
An account of Cromwell's life published in 1659. Compliant journalists played a huge role in burnishing his reputation

GETTY IMAGES

Beastly figure Oliver Cromwell had a high opinion of himself, but not everyone agreed. This Dutch broadside from 1652, engraved during the First Anglo-Dutch War, portrays Cromwell as a tyrant oppressing neighbouring nations. The image shows: **A** Cromwell wearing a triple crown and peacock feathers. **B** A Scotsman lying beneath Cromwell's right foot. **C** An Irishman on his knees, gripped between Cromwell's legs. **D** A Dutchman lying on his back on a table while Cromwell disembowels him. **E** A Frenchman grasped under Cromwell's left arm. **F** A griffin, perhaps representing Charles II, excreting gold coins as he reaches for Cromwell's crown. The pictures across the back wall (**G** to **K**) show scenes including the execution of Charles I, and money being seized from royalists.

part of his personal portfolio of successes, even though he does not seem to have been there.

In his own accounts of military actions, Cromwell adopted a standard tactic: of according all glory to God and extolling the achievements of his side in the plural form, without mentioning names, save those of his immediate subordinates. This served at once to give an appearance of modesty while completely eclipsing his fellow commanders.

Cromwell was also a master of massaging the truth in order to airbrush his missteps on the battlefield. Belton was a drawn skirmish at which he committed the elementary mistake of abandoning the field to pursue a fleeing enemy wing before the action was won. In his (published) report, it was a total, glittering victory.

His next battle, at Gainsborough on 28 July 1643, ended in disaster when an invading royalist army chased Cromwell's party out of Lincolnshire, causing a town he had been sent to save to be lost. In Cromwell's account of the episode, however, it was explicitly a glorious success. Following the genuinely stunning victory at Marston Moor the following year, Cromwell scorned the part played by his Scottish allies, dismissing them as "a few Scots in our rear", despite the fact that they had given his cavalry wing its decisive numerical superiority.

After Marston Moor, Cromwell had less need to promote himself directly in this way, because he had a trusty set of admiring journalists who could normally be relied upon to eulogise him. In his service with the New Model Army, the national force established in 1645 that eventually won the war for his cause, there was no call for self-promotion, because his actions were always represented with admiration in all the official despatches to parliament. Like most Civil War propagandists, Cromwell also routinely gave the impression that in every action his enemies outnumbered his own men, so making the ensuing successes the more superlative. The rising Cromwell undoubtedly believed that the glory of God was best served by winning the maximum glory for himself.

This characteristic was accompanied by another tendency: to demonise his opponents. Throughout his career, Cromwell saw the universe as a battlefield between good and evil, in which he was invariably ranged on the side of good (and, by extension, the side of his deity). This view of the cosmos is built into evangelical Christianity – and so, inevitably, into Puritanism. In Cromwell's case, however, it was reinforced by his personality.

No sooner had he manifested his religious conversion in 1635 than he was already referring to the executors of royal religious policy as "the enemies of God". This trait carried straight into the burgeoning political and then military crisis of the 1640s (when tensions between the king and his critics erupted into outright conflict) for which he made a natural holy warrior. From the start, he was anxious to obtain savage retaliation against his ideological enemies, calling first for the prosecution of leading churchmen who had enacted royal policy and then for action against emerging defenders of the king.

When war broke out in 1642, Cromwell was able to employ physical violence in place of legal action, and revelled in it, exulting over "doing execution" on fleeing royalists at Belton and the killing of an enemy commander at Gainsborough. He gleefully reported how one of his captains slew the wretched man "with a thrust under his short ribs" as he lay wounded on the ground. A pamphlet eulogising his campaign around Stamford in July 1643 celebrated the slaughter of a band of armed countrymen near the town.

"Cromwell gleefully reported how one of his captains slew the wretched man "with a thrust under his short ribs" as he lay wounded on the ground

All this led up to the prodigious massacre of the defeated royalists at Marston Moor, whom in his own account Cromwell systematically dehumanised in a pair of images that made them first mechanical and then demonic: "stubble to our swords" and "His [ie God's] enemies". This attitude to warfare was scripted by Old Testament accounts of genocide against heathen tribes, but these matched naturally with the savage streak in Cromwell's own nature.

By the time of his campaigns with the New Model Army, he appears to have learned to rein in such savagery, becoming apparently more aware of the propaganda rewards of clemency. He applied punctiliously the New Model's usual tariff of terms accorded to governors of royalist fortresses who offered to accept terms. This held good even at the Roman Catholic stronghold of Basing House.

But even here, Cromwell's mercy had its limits. Aside from the governor, Basing House was treated with the greatest severity because it attempted surrender only after the attacking soldiers had got into the precinct. What's more, Cromwell prepared his soldiers to inflict violence and retribution before the assault by quoting a biblical text which called for the cleansing of the land of idolators, declaring of Catholic images that "they that make them are like unto them" and so should be destroyed with them. His notorious massacre at the Irish town of Drogheda, later in his career, was long presaged.

And it wasn't just royalists and Catholics who felt the full force of Cromwell's brutality. His tendency to view his own ideological opponents as enemies of God was accompanied in turn by a readiness to dispose of members of his own wartime party who had become inconvenient. There was an early illustration of this trait in a botched attempt in his youth to get his uncle declared a lunatic so that he could obtain immediate access to the old man's estate.

Once the Civil War was under way, Cromwell had better

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success with a trio of upper-class officers whom he found to be liabilities as fellow commanders in 1643: Lord Grey of Groby, John Hotham, and Lord Willoughby of Parham. Grey got off lightest, as Cromwell simply denounced him behind his back to fellow parliamentarians and got him rebuked and ordered to cooperate.

Hotham proved an ideological opponent as well as an incompetent commander, and so was arrested and charged with treachery – he was dragged from his bed to prison in the middle of the night by Cromwell's musketeers. Hotham was ruined as a politician and a soldier but Cromwell wasn't satisfied until he had hounded him to his death. Hotham had brought down his father in his fall (persuading him to flee to the royalists with him), but Cromwell pressed a vendetta against both men, first by testifying at the trial of the son and then by fighting attempts to postpone or reprieve the execution of the father. He was successful in getting both beheaded.

Willoughby, the most capable and least culpable, was the hardest to dislodge, but Cromwell managed it by a campaign of defamation within parliament in which he told blatant untruths, charging the former with inefficiency and mismanagement in the defence of Lincolnshire. As a result, Willoughby lost his military command.

Cromwell's final and most eminent victim of this kind was Edward Montagu, 2nd Earl of Manchester, his commander in parliament's Eastern Association army in 1643–44. The tactic was identical to that employed against Willoughby: a campaign of accusation to destroy the earl's reputation both as a soldier and as a reliable supporter of the war itself. Once more Cromwell supported his charges with a catalogue of lies and misrepresentations. Manchester fought back with unexpected determination and made equally damaging allegations against Cromwell himself, the truth of which cannot now be established. Cromwell's reaction was swift and decisive: to abandon the contest and support a solution that would result in Manchester and Cromwell both resigning along with most of the other generals.

From then on, Cromwell felled no more colleagues, because he didn't need to. His superior in the New Model Army, Sir Thomas Fairfax, was the perfect commander for him: capable and dynamic, popular with his officers, and prepared to support Cromwell. It may be concluded, therefore, that Cromwell suffered from no inherent inability to accept subordination to another's authority and no innate tendency to quarrel with anybody with whom he was partnered. Instead he targeted men who had become obstructive and inconvenient to him, and he did so with a high degree of ability and ruthlessness.

“John Hotham was ruined as a politician and a soldier but Cromwell wasn't satisfied until he had hounded him to his death

Brother in arms Cromwell had a good relationship with Thomas Fairfax (above), his superior in the New Model Army. Instead, he reserved his spite for men he saw as obstructive and inconvenient

BRIDGEMAN

He also bore grudges. One example of this is his treatment of Robert Bernard, a smooth lawyer who outmanoeuvred and humiliated Cromwell at Huntingdon in his youth and so precipitated his abandonment of the Cambridgeshire town in which he had grown up. The petty and sustained malice with which Cromwell persecuted this man in 1643, when he became vulnerable to arrest and interrogation by Cromwell's soldiers, is revealing. After the wretched fellow sent letters from himself and a parliamentarian magnate, protesting his innocence, in April 1643 Cromwell replied curtly that “we know you are disaffected to the parliament”, so accusing Bernard of being a traitor to the cause, without troubling to supply evidence.

These are the actions of a man in a critical period of his life – one that turned him from an obscure provincial into an enduring national figure. Even in this first and establishing phase of his career, a close reconsideration of the records reveals the complexity of Cromwell's nature. He was as courageous, devout, resolute, principled, intelligent, eloquent, able, adaptable and dedicated as historical reputation has long made him. He was also, however, self-seeking, unscrupulous, dishonest, manipulative, vindictive and bloodthirsty. Above all, he is not somebody to be taken at his word. H

Ronald Hutton is a professor of history at the University of Bristol and a leading authority on the British Isles in the 16th and 17th centuries. His new biography, *The Making of Oliver Cromwell*, is published by Yale in August

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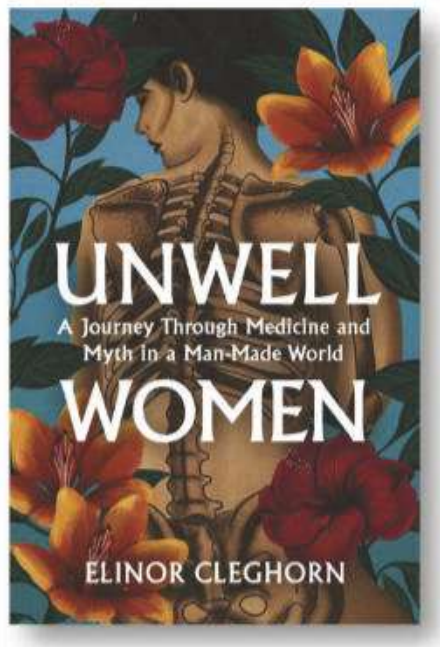
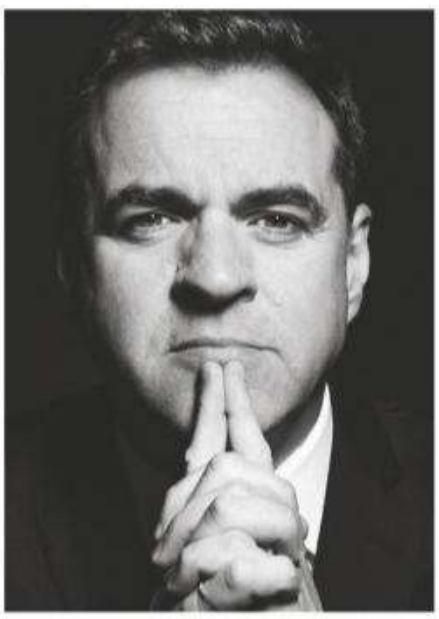
Thursday 22 July, 7pm BST





Niall Ferguson

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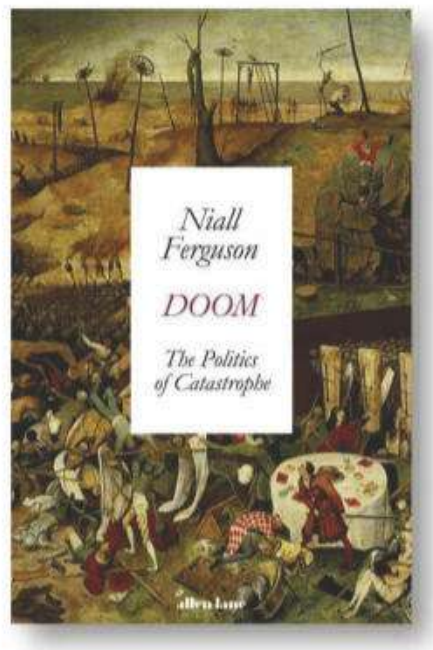

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THE GAMES THAT REDEFINED JAPAN

As Tokyo prepares to host the delayed Summer Olympics, **Christopher Harding** reveals how Japan used the 1964 Games to restore its global status from postwar pariah to high-tech go-getter

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Complements
Christopher Harding's
BBC Radio 3 series
Japan in Five Lives

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Igniting a new era
Yoshinori Sakai prepares to light the Olympic cauldron during the opening ceremony in 1964. Born on the day that the first atomic bomb fell on Hiroshima, he was a symbol of Japan's postwar reconstruction and peace

Pavement art
The avant garde art collective Hi-Red Center scrubs a Tokyo street during the 1964 Olympics, which demanded a radical nationwide face-lift

On Friday 16 October 1964, a small section of Tokyo's business district was treated to a meticulous cleansing. Young men in white lab coats and face masks dabbed at the pavement with cotton buds. Others scrubbed away with tiny brushes. And one man crouched down low, inspecting the results of their efforts with a magnifying glass.

A signboard nearby bore the legend *sōjichū* – cleaning in progress. Photographs of the scene suggest that passers-by were happy enough with this explanation, the team's eccentric approach to their task notwithstanding. Two words written in English on the sign explained why: "Be Clean!" It was a familiar injunction that by then ran broad and deep in the minds of Tokyoites. Their city, and indeed their whole country, was in the midst of one of history's fastest face-lifts, in preparation for the Tokyo Summer Olympics that month, and cleanliness was its keynote. It wasn't just the streets that needed a scrub: the Games also provided a chance to polish Japan's international image, so badly tarnished by the Second World War.

The first years after Japan's surrender in the summer of 1945 had been marked by poverty, disease and a deep despair among Japanese people of ever seeing their country's fortunes or international reputation recover. News of atrocities committed by the Imperial Japanese Army in China and elsewhere had begun to circulate both at home and abroad. Allied prisoners of war returned home with horrifying accounts of brutal treatment at the hands of their captors. And wartime propaganda campaigns, which caricatured Japan's population as willing helpmates to an evil emperor, had long-lasting after-effects: for some in the west, Japanese aggression called into question not just the nation's leadership but its very soul. For the fiercest of these critics, Japan's trajectory since opening up to global trade and diplomacy in the late 19th century looked in retrospect like a case of modernisation without civilisation, of power unrestrained by a sense of the value of human life.

All this presented a challenge for the US, which dominated the Allied occupation of Japan from 1945 to 1952, and which was determined to make of its erstwhile enemy a democratic, business-friendly and staunchly anti-communist ally. Occupation-era propaganda, alongside the International Military Tribunal for the Far East that convened in Tokyo between 1946 and 1948, sought to focus war responsibility on a handful of elites while presenting the Japanese population as a whole as their victims.

Yet this effort was only somewhat successful. US advocates for the "new Japan" failed to secure an invitation for Japanese athletes to participate in the Summer Olympics of 1948 in London, for instance. British bitterness at the behaviour of Japan's soldiery during the war was far too fresh. Avery Brundage, then vice-president of the International Olympic Committee, reminded an associate involved in the Allied occupation of Japan that the English were still "very badly off". The presence of Japanese (or, indeed, German) sportspeople at the London Games – parts of the infrastructure of which was built by German prisoners of war – ran the risk, he cautioned, of sparking demonstrations on the streets of the British capital.

A new national story

Fourteen years later, in 1962, French president Charles de Gaulle made headlines when he referred to the Japanese prime minister, Ikeda Hayato, as "that transistor salesman", reflecting the postwar boom in Japan's electronics industry. And a piece in *The Economist* that same year declared an "economic

Dark chapter
Liberated Allied prisoners of war pass former guards at the infamous Ōfuna camp in 1945. Accounts of brutal treatment in PoW camps sullied views of Japan

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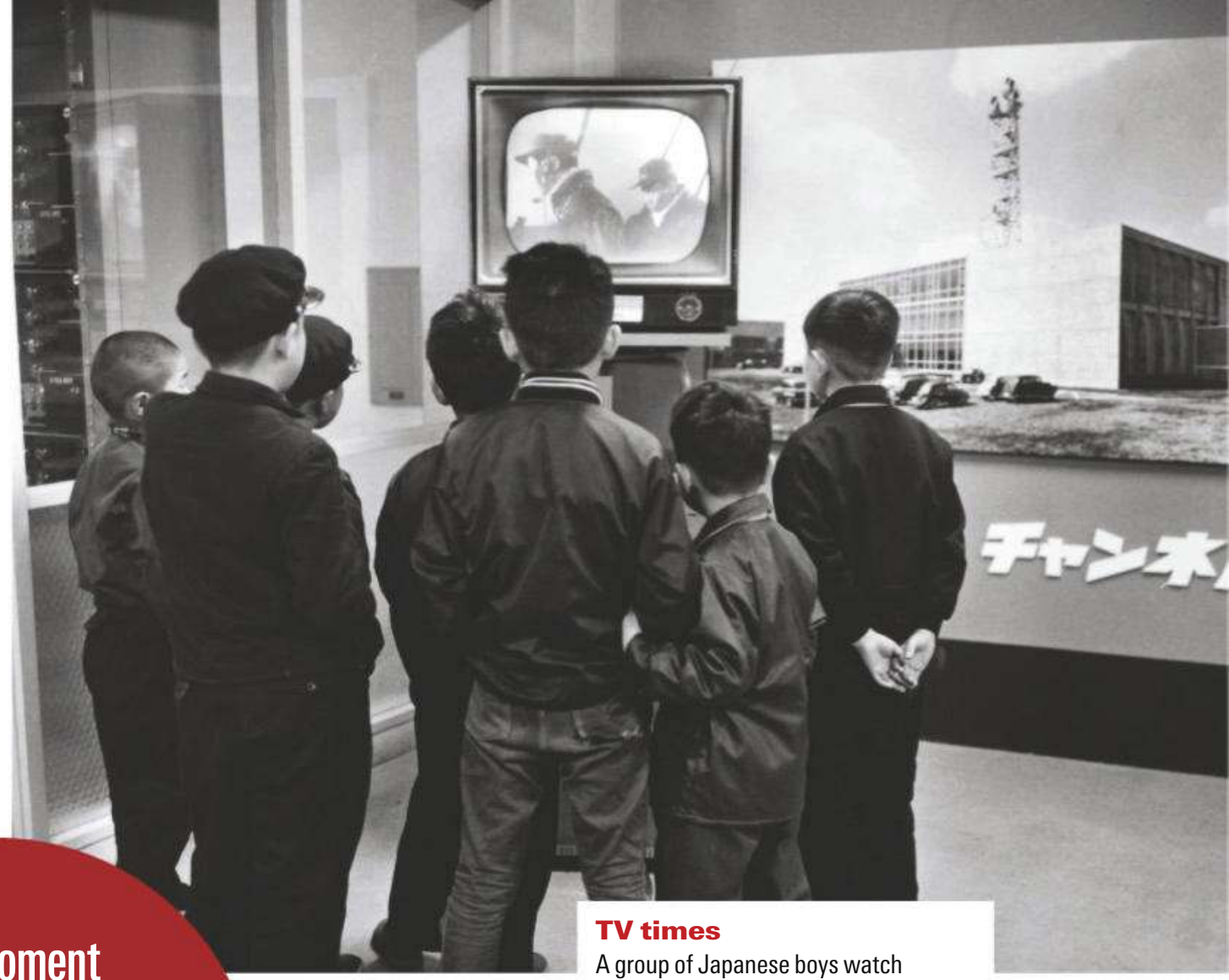


TV times
A group of Japanese boys watch a TV in 1960. Japan was famed for its electronics industries, but some critics said the country was misappropriating western innovations to sell back to western consumers

miracle" in Japan: a rapid rise in economic growth and standards of living.

Commentators were well aware of the role of US aid to Japan in achieving this feat: generous terms of trade had been offered, alongside considerable financial and technological assistance – the transistor was, after all, an American invention. But in seeking explanations they also honed in on a set of putatively "Japanese" characteristics: diligence, self-sacrifice and loyalty – almost to a fault – to a group or a cause. Here, at last, was the raw material for a plausible purifying of the nation's reputation.

Reading these qualities back into the 1930s and 1940s it was possible to imagine, in a way that westerners had been unwilling or unable to do in the years immediately after 1945, that most Japanese had indeed been hard-working "innocents", manoeuvred by unscrupulous leaders into supporting disastrous wars. Those wars would – should – never be forgotten, but it was possible to understand them in a new light.

The moment was ripe for the telling of a fresh story about Japan – one connecting a bright future to a rich past

If these stereotypes about the Japanese – which remained remarkably durable across the decades to come – contained one negative element, it was a lingering suspicion of soullessness. This was older than the war, dating back to the late 19th century when Japan's rapid modernisation was said by some to rely on rather hollow mimicry of western institutions and values. The transistor became a fresh postwar symbol of this claim, its highly profitable deployment by new companies such as Sony causing critics to claim that Japan's new-found economic success depended on companies misappropriating, miniaturising and then marketing western innovations back to western consumers. Some commentators extended the critique to culture: one postwar BBC television documentary featured the claim that Japanese musicians had mastered the forms of jazz and pop without really feeling the music.

Among the Japanese, too, there were worries that their country was at risk of being defined by no more than balance sheets and creeping Americanisation in the spheres of fashion, film, music and social mores. These trends were particularly concerning for conservative Japanese commentators, some of whom believed that the United States had followed up on its military victory in 1945 by launching a culture war.

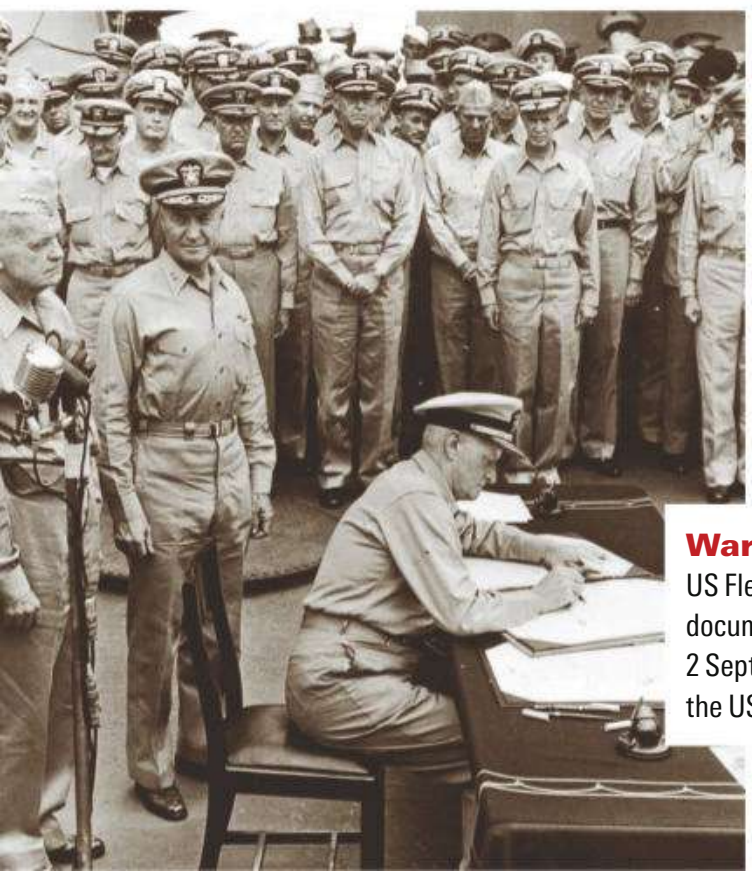
A broad array of Japanese symbols, social institutions and art forms had either been done away with altogether during the Allied occupation or subject to policies designed to consign them to the "bad old days" of a discredited Japanese past. Some of this activity seemed silly or naïve in retrospect: the banning of images of Mount Fuji (for its links to Japanese nationalism), for example, and the encouragement of "democratic" kissing and hand-holding at the expense of "feudal" bowing. Other initiatives appeared more subtle. Japan's family system had been reoriented by a new emphasis on individual and women's rights. Reform of Japanese schools had seen the old moral education swept away, while children were offered an account of recent history so wretched and guilt-inducing that it bordered on masochism.

Thus the moment was ripe, in the early 1960s, for the telling of a fresh story about Japan – one that was capable of connecting a bright future to a past that was infinitely richer than the "dark valley" of the 1930s and early 1940s. As luck would have it, the perfect opportunity was on the horizon. In October 1964, Japan would become the focus of international attention in a way that it hadn't been since the summer of 1945: Tokyo was about to become the first Asian city to host the Summer Olympic Games.

Building the future

Large parts of the prewar Japanese capital, a city of wood and paper, had been lost to firebombing raids in 1944 and 1945. Rebuilt in rapid, ramshackle fashion, it played host now to a fresh round of reconstruction. New concrete apartments and office buildings went up, along with lavish hotels and mile upon mile of twisting, tunnelling expressway.

GETTY IMAGES/AKG-IMAGES



War is over
US Fleet Admiral Chester W Nimitz signs documents confirming Japan's surrender on 2 September 1945. The subsequent occupation saw the US foster positive relations with the Japanese

Flying bullet The first *shinkansen* high-speed "bullet" train line, which shrank the journey time between Tokyo and Osaka, is opened on 1 October 1964, days before the start of the Olympics

Two new subway lines were added to the Tokyo network, and a monorail was constructed running out to Haneda airport. Japan's biggest Olympic boast of all was the bullet train, or *shinkansen* ("new trunk line"). Dreamed up in the 1930s as a means of carrying ordnance at high speed around Japan's colonial empire, it was finally turned into a reality by engineers employing skills picked up working on Zero fighters and navy signals intelligence during the war. When the first railway line between Tokyo and Osaka had opened back in 1889, the journey had taken 16 and a half hours. The "airplane that runs on rails", as the Japanese media loved to describe the new train, would complete that trip in just four.

Preparations did not go entirely to plan, however. Enthusiasm for the Games in some quarters was focused primarily on their pocket-lining potential. Speculators were quick to buy up land along the planned routes of expressways and *shinkansen* lines, holding up construction and pushing up costs as they haggled with their leaders – in appropriately democratic postwar fashion – over the prices at which they might sell. Some projects had to be scaled back as a result, though elsewhere innovation was given a useful nudge. The simple single-unit moulded bathrooms – toilet, sink, bath – that later generations of tourists would come to associate with Japanese hotels were a product of this period, designed so that they could be built elsewhere and then lifted by crane into hotel rooms while still under construction.

Some Japanese baulked at the cost of the Games, while others worried about their leaders' bread-and-circuses approach to controlling the population. The men seen meticulously cleaning the Tokyo pavement that Saturday in October 1964 were members of the avant-garde art collective Hi-Red Center. Another of its works was *Shelter Plan*, in which volunteers – including a young Yoko Ono – were measured up for their own personal atomic bomb shelters, the resulting product looking very much like a coffin. Their message: the Japanese were too ready to take prosperity in exchange for meaningful political control, sacrificing the early democratic promise of the Allied occupation in favour of political and cultural conservatism, closely aligned with Cold War US interests.

The most expensive opening ceremony in the history of the Games blended innovation with a revamped Japanese traditionalism

As the date of the opening ceremony – 10 October – neared, Tokyoites took to wearing earplugs at night, seeking respite from the sound of piledrivers that operated 24/7. By day they were subjected to the government hammering away at their behaviour, so that foreign visitors might form the desired opinion of the Japanese. Men were enjoined not to urinate in public (mobile toilets were hurriedly ordered to help facilitate the request), while taxi drivers were told

Raising the roof The extraordinary suspended roof of Yoyogi National Gymnasium during construction in 1964. Some Japanese criticised the cost of hosting the Games

GETTY IMAGES

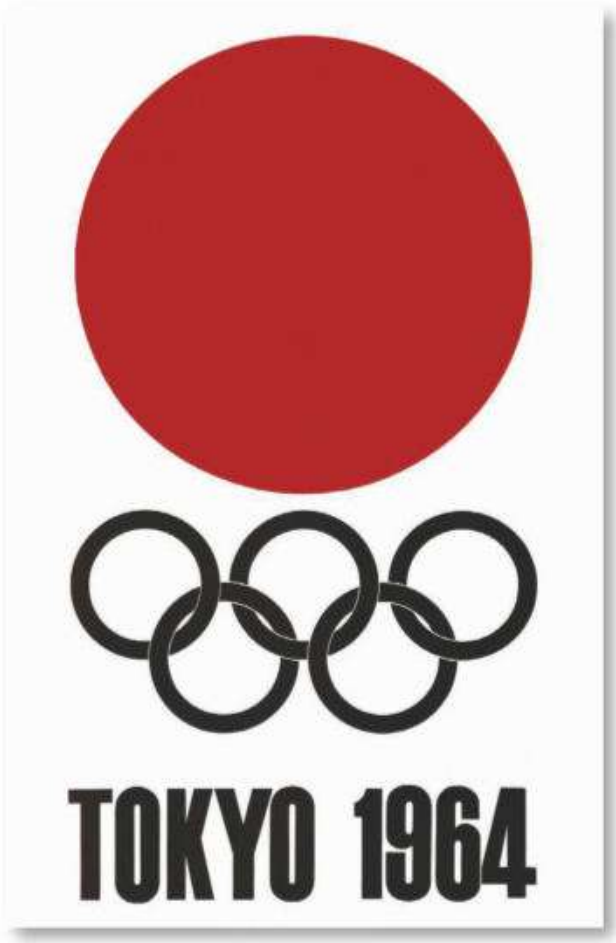
to cut down on their horn-honking. Sex workers, beggars, pickpockets and homeless people were cleared out of the city, as was much of the criminal element. One advantage of close links between the city's underworld and some of Japan's politicians was that the latter could persuade gang bosses to send some of their more threatening-looking men to the countryside or seaside for "spiritual training" while the world was in town for the Olympics. Completing the cleansing of Tokyo were rain showers on 9 October, ending an unusually long dry patch and helping to clear away some of the air pollution created by the non-stop preparation efforts of recent weeks.

Ceremony and hospitality

When 75,000 visitors gathered in the National Stadium for the opening ceremony, everything seemed to come together. They had arrived via shiny new methods of transport, helped through the immaculately clean streets of Tokyo by locals pre-drilled in how to offer directions in excessively polite English. And they were witnesses to easily the most expensive opening ceremony in the history of the Games thus far, blending cutting-edge innovation with a revamped Japanese traditionalism. There was live broadcasting for the first time (and in full colour, too), the recording of results on computers, and "photo finish" technology. There were kimonos, cherry blossoms, chrysanthemum perfume pumped in from dugouts, and an exhibition of traditional art and crafts nearby. Thanks to the Ministry of Education, there was also a carefully choreographed comeback for four major Japanese symbols, tainted just a generation before by colonialism and war.

Flag day
Japanese gymnast Takashi Ono reads the Olympic Oath during the opening ceremony of the 1964 Tokyo Games – an event that was painstakingly planned and designed to overhaul Japan's image at home and abroad

BRIDGEMAN/AKG-IMAGES



Red flag rehabilitated
The official logo of the 1964 Games featured the red sun of the Japanese *Hinomaru* flag – a symbol formerly associated with imperialism and war

The first of these symbols was the emperor. Compelled under the occupation to renounce his divinity, in the postwar constitution the rather ill-defined status of Japan's emperor – "symbol of the state" – left everyone unsure whether or not Japan actually possessed a head of state any longer. The opening ceremony answered that question with an implied "yes", by positioning Hirohito as sponsor of the Games and allowing him to stand up and speak at the opening ceremony. Gone was the fearsome focal point of Allied wartime propaganda, replaced by a slightly awkward man in an ill-fitting suit – the work, it was said, of a tailor forbidden from touching his exalted client.

The *Hinomaru* national flag – a red disc on a white background – and national anthem, *Kimigayo*, had likewise lost their status after the war. Here again the Games came to the rescue. The *Hinomaru* was one of the national flags of competing nations displayed around Tokyo, while also forming part of the official logo for the 1964 Games, placed above the five Olympic rings. That logo was pinned proudly to the chest of the young athlete who carried the Olympic torch up the 160 steps to light the cauldron at the start of the Games. Yoshinori Sakai, it was made widely known, had been born on the day when the

Symbol of the state
Emperor Hirohito watches the Games. Vilified by Allied wartime propaganda, his appearance at the 1964 Olympics repositioned the role of emperor

High five
Olympic rings traced in the sky by the Blue Impulse display team, comprising pilots of Japan's Self-Defence Forces. It was a show of aerial prowess rather than martial might

Net benefit
Women's volleyball player Sata Isobe spikes the ball against the US. Her team's gold medal contributed to the 1964 Games' enduring legacy in Japan

atomic bomb was dropped on Hiroshima, his role an artful combination of sport, pacifism, regeneration and the suggestion that the Japanese had been victims in that terrible war. The anthem *Kimigayo* rang out around the stadium, accompanying the release of "doves of peace".

Last but not least, the opening ceremony crowd in Tokyo, and of course viewers around the world, were treated to a display of Japanese air power. This took the form not of bombing or strafing but, rather, the tracing of the Olympic rings by an aerobatic display team whose most threatening aspect was its slightly risqué name: Blue Impulse. The pilots were members of Japan's new Self-Defence Forces, which were working to earn trust at home and abroad during the Olympics by helping out with security; an entire platoon was sent out to look for a tobacco pouch dropped by a European prince at an equestrian event. Here was just one, albeit rather outlandish, example of a broader deployment at the Games of Japanese *omotenashi* – a kind of hospitality on steroids: nothing was too much trouble in helping visitors to enjoy the gleaming new city.

Opinion polls and television ratings in Japan suggested that the enormous effort that went into Tokyo 1964 paid off handsomely. The opening and closing ceremonies, along with the stunning success of the women's volleyball team – which vanquished the Soviet Union to take Olympic gold – attracted record ratings, and remained uppermost in people's minds when questioned about this entire era in later years. Foreign reaction was just as warm. British former Olympic athlete and sports journalist Chris Brasher praised the "hard work, humility and charm" of his hosts, and described the opening ceremony as "the most brilliantly organised spectacle ever held in international sport".

The Japanese deployed *omotenashi* – hospitality on steroids: nothing was too much trouble in helping visitors

Practice run
Locals attend a practice event at the Komazawa Stadium before the opening of the Games in 1964. Japanese hosts were praised for their "hard work, humility and charm"

All of this sets a high bar for the 2020 Olympics. Even before the Covid-19 pandemic, there were those who wondered whether Japan now has a story to tell that can match that of 1964 for timeliness and coherence. First it was going to be recovery from the "triple disasters" of 2011: earthquake, tsunami and nuclear meltdown. That was later modified to include a recovery from Covid that has proven more elusive than hoped.

In truth, Japan no longer needs an Olympic makeover in the way it did in 1964. For a society as successful and complex as Japan, which now speaks to the world in so many varied ways – fashion and food, science and pop culture, diplomacy and overseas aid – attempting to boil itself down would feel like a backward step. However the rescheduled Tokyo 2020 unfolds, Japan will survive – and we'll always have 1964. H

ALAMY/GETTY IMAGES

Christopher Harding is senior lecturer in history at the University of Edinburgh. His new BBC Radio 3 series, *Japan in Five Lives*, airs from 19 July

BBC RADIO 3

WATCH & LISTEN Follow BBC television and radio coverage of the **Tokyo Olympics** from 23 July

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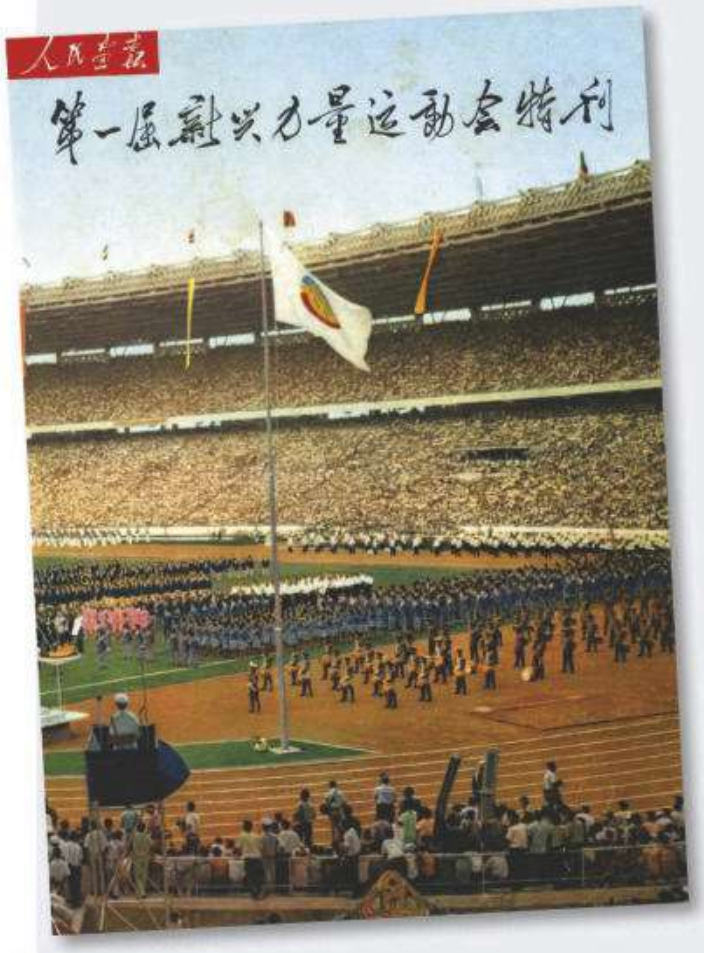
COMPETING IDEOLOGIES

Three other nations whose experience of the 1964 Olympics was shaped by politics



The opening ceremony of the 1963 Games of the New Emerging Forces in Jakarta, pictured on a Chinese magazine cover. China, which participated in this rival event, withdrew from the Tokyo Games

CHINA WITHDRAWS

The People's Republic of China was notably absent from the 1964 Games, having withdrawn after the International Olympic Committee (IOC) placed a ban on athletes who had participated in a rival event the previous year – the Games of the New Emerging Forces (GANEFO), created by Indonesia's President Sukarno and held in the Indonesian capital, Jakarta. While Japan used the 1964 Games to stake a new claim in the international order, Sukarno was intent on establishing an alternative order rooted in Asian and African neutralism and anti-colonialism; GANEFO was effectively the athletics counterpart to the Bandung (or Asian-African) Conference of 1955. Indonesia and North Korea also withdrew from Tokyo 1964 because of the IOC ban. Japan had allowed its athletes to attend GANEFO, but only those of non-Olympic standard.

Gymnasts Birgit Radochla and Ingrid Föst wear the badge of the United Team of Germany, which included athletes from both West and East

GERMANY UNITES

Coming fourth in the medals table in 1964, after the United States, the Soviet Union and Japan, was the United Team of Germany. This was a team of athletes from West and East Germany, which competed together at the Olympics in 1956, 1960 and 1964. Some of the difficulties in establishing the team mirrored those experienced by Japan in the run-up to the Tokyo Olympics. To the question of which of the countries' national anthems would be used, the answer was, eventually, neither; the "Ode to Joy", from Beethoven's Ninth Symphony, was chosen instead. And to the question of which flag to use, the solution – thanks in part to IOC intervention – was to overlay the five Olympic rings onto the horizontal black, red and gold stripes of the flag of the Weimar Republic (1919–33). The United Team came to an end with the granting to East Germany of its own Olympic Committee in 1965. Germany once again became a single force at the Olympics in 1992 at Barcelona, two years after reunification.

SOUTH AFRICA EXCLUDED

South Africa was excluded from the 1964 Games after its government refused to modify its apartheid policies. The country was also barred from the subsequent Summer Games, in Mexico City in 1968, and was expelled from the Olympic Movement altogether in 1970. South African apartheid had a direct impact on sport: it included an official ban on the participation in international competitions of mixed white and non-white teams, with the result that few non-white South Africans were able to compete abroad. South Africa finally made it back into Olympic competition in 1992, at the Barcelona Games, two years after the release from prison of Nelson Mandela. One of the enduring images of the Barcelona Olympics was of the Ethiopian runner Derartu Tulu, the first black African woman to win an Olympic gold medal, holding hands with the white South African runner Elana Meyer during her victory lap.

Ethiopia's Derartu Tulu – the first black African woman to win an Olympic gold medal (at the Barcelona Games in 1992) – celebrates her 10,000m victory with South Africa's Elana Meyer

ALAMY/GETTY IMAGES/AKG-IMAGES

Q&A

A selection of historical **conundrums** answered by experts

What's the history of low-alcohol beer?

It could well be the history of most beers, actually. Beer is one of the world's oldest alcoholic drinks, and in many different periods and places it wasn't particularly potent.

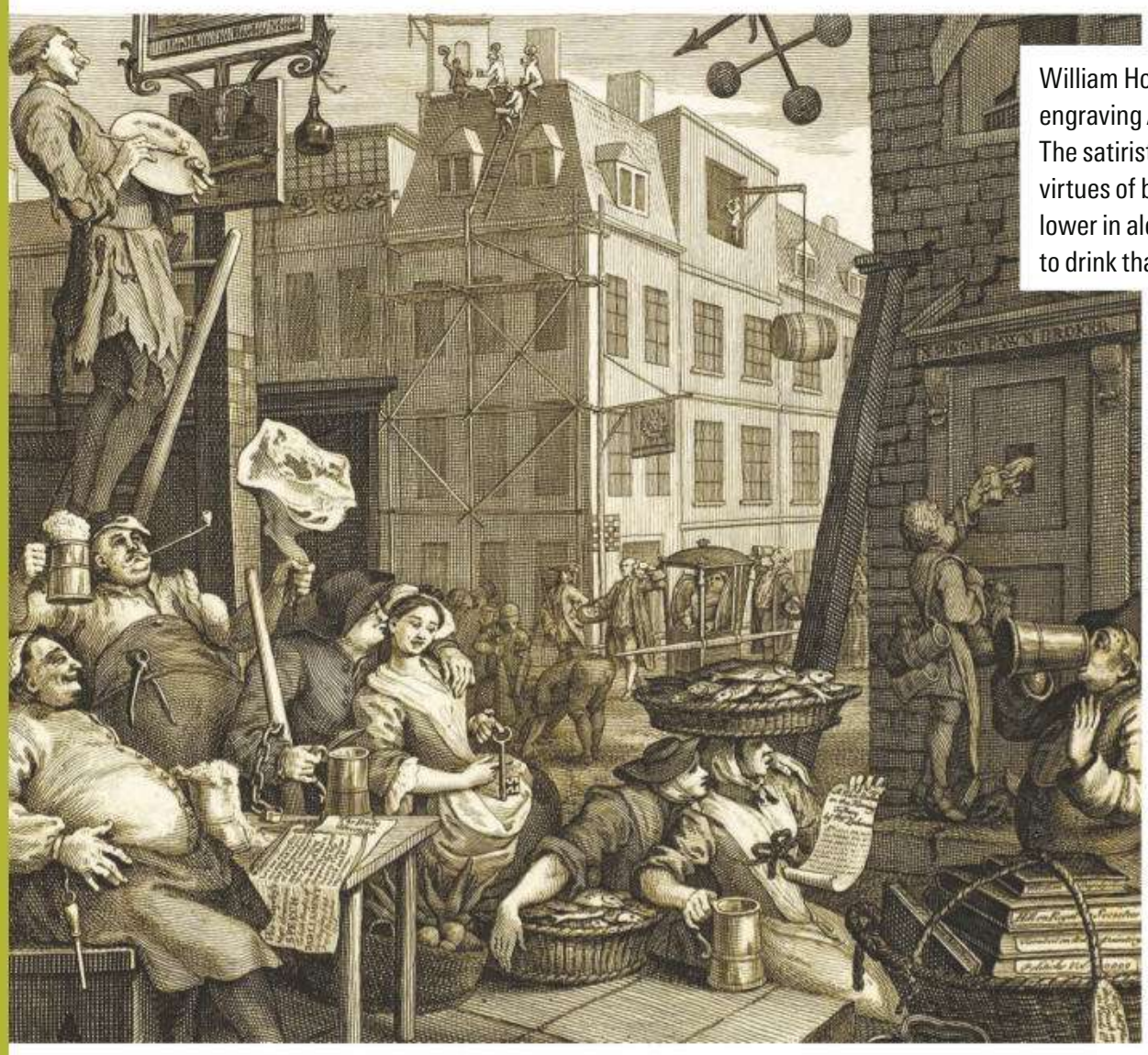
We all "know", for instance, that even children consumed beer in medieval England because it was safer than water. In truth, though the ingredients were boiled, they might then have been kept in unwashed containers; any hygiene advantage was as likely to come from the drink's microbial stew, which would tolerate few outside pathogens.

Our ancestors often considered beer to be as much food as drink. "Small beer" or "table beer" was rarely clear, often looking like thin porridge. Commonly made with ingredients already used for a stronger brew, its alcohol content was "small"; an adult could consume a gallon or more in a day with no ill effects.

Hogarth's famous 1751 print *Beer Street*, contrasting with the evils of *Gin Lane*, extolled the wholesome virtue of a drink that was low in alcohol. However, advances in brewing meant that by the 19th century ever-stronger beers were being consumed by urban workers in cities where the water was definitely dangerous. This in turn led to alcoholism, the birth of the temperance movement, and the installation of drinking fountains by assorted philanthropists to provide clean, free water – and keep people away from pubs.

Low-alcohol beers enjoyed a revival in the 20th century for various reasons. Many such drinks contain fewer calories than full-alcohol equivalents, and consumers can drive or operate machinery after drinking them. In many countries they attract lower taxes and can be legally bought by youngsters. Beer with very low or no alcohol content is also permitted in some conservative Muslim countries.

Eugene Byrne, author and journalist specialising in history



William Hogarth's 1751 engraving *Beer Street*. The satirist extolled the virtues of beer as being lower in alcohol and safer to drink than gin

DID YOU KNOW...?

Phony phenomenon

In 1813, a man named Charles Redheffer invited New Yorkers to pay money to see what he claimed was a miraculous perpetual motion machine. One visitor to the exhibition, Robert Fulton (pictured), inventor of steamboats and submarines, was suspicious. Noticing a long cord hidden behind the machine, Fulton followed it up some stairs where he found an old, bearded man eating a crust of bread while turning a hand-crank. His scam revealed, Redheffer fled the city and his machine was destroyed.

Holy hold-up

The 17th-century highwayman Jack Collet often committed his crimes while dressed as a bishop. His career was interrupted when he lost his religious robes in a game of dice – but, according to *The Newgate Calendar*, he hastened to replace them by holding up a real cleric. The bishop of Winchester was perturbed when, after being robbed at gunpoint, he was also forced to hand over his vestments. Collet was caught and executed in 1691 for "sacrilegious burglary".

Frontline footballer

The only professional footballer to win the Victoria Cross (pictured) during the First World War was a full-back who played for Bradford Park Avenue. Donald Bell was at the Yorkshire club when the conflict broke out, and enlisted to serve soon afterwards. He was awarded the medal for "most conspicuous bravery" in 1916 when, under heavy fire, he attacked a German machine-gun post. Bell was killed on the Somme five days later. His VC is now on display at the National Football Museum in Manchester.

MARY EVANS

Nick Rennison, writer and journalist specialising in history

MAP OF THE CRIMEA.

How did the Crimean War make an impact on British beards?

The Crimean War marked a turning point in beard history. Amid awful battlefield conditions, British soldiers grew huge beards both for protection against harsh elements and to signal to their enemies that they were tough, uber-masculine fighting men.

With their military prowess, these facially hirsute "supermen" were powerful role models for other British males facing new challenges in the 19th century. These included adapting to working conditions in factories and offices, and broader fears about modern life and morality – not least growing calls by women for more power and rights. It all contributed to a feeling that their masculinity was being eroded.

Desperate to reclaim their supposed "natural" masculinity, British men sought a timeless symbol of male authority to cleave to – and the beard offered the perfect solution. What better way for desk-bound office clerks to regain their vigour than to abandon their razors and adopt this ultimate symbol of martial manliness?

Dr Alun Withey, historian of the body and author of *Concerning Beards* (Bloomsbury, 2021)

ILLUSTRATION BY **GLEN MCBETH**

How were fireworks made in ancient China?

The first firework in China was probably a piece of bamboo. Because bamboo grows in segments, cutting the stalk in the right places yields a short tube sealed at both ends. Throw it into a fire and the air inside the tube expands, causing the tube to burst loudly, much like popcorn.

By the ninth century, however, the Chinese and their neighbours had developed a new tool for making fireworks: a compound they called "Fire Medicine", which westerners came to know as gunpowder. These early recipes contained less nitrate than is optimal so, rather than producing explosions, they made bright, fast-burning fires. Early fireworks in China were therefore probably more like spark fountains than firecrackers. However, as the proportions of the various ingredients were adjusted over time, gunpowder became more explosive and was used to make firecrackers.

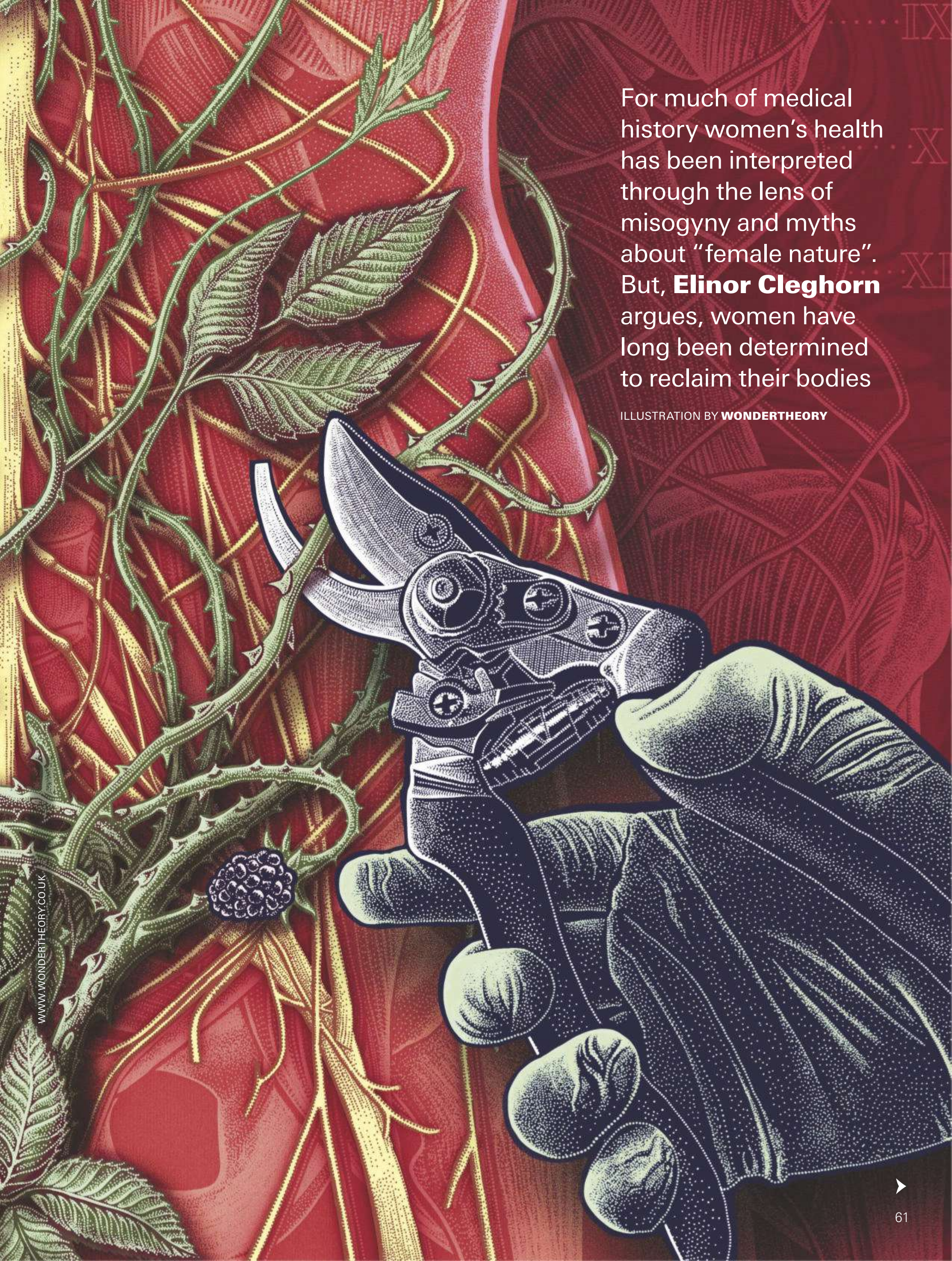
Then, as now, a firecracker is a simple device (see the photo of modern Chinese examples, right). Simply seal some gunpowder in a tube, set it off and it makes a loud bang. Leave one end of the tube unsealed to make a rocket. Attach it to a long stick and it flies relatively straight. Leave the stick off to make a device that scoots around unpredictably. One early device of this type was called a "flying rat"; on one occasion, such a cracker reputedly nearly flew up an empress's robe.

You might hear that the Chinese focused more on fashioning fireworks than weapons, which is supposedly why they fell behind the more warlike west – but don't believe it: they used gunpowder for weaponry from the very beginning. Nearly every type of ancient Chinese firework had a military analogue. Rockets could be aimed at enemies; firecrackers could be enlarged and used as bombs; and large spark-spewing tubes became fire-lances, ancestors of the gun. H

Tonio Andrade, author of *The Gunpowder Age* (Princeton University Press, 2016)

DREAMSTIME

The gender pain gap



For much of medical history women's health has been interpreted through the lens of misogyny and myths about "female nature". But, **Elinor Cleghorn** argues, women have long been determined to reclaim their bodies

ILLUSTRATION BY **WONDERTHEORY**

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In 1405 Christine de Pizan, a historian, poet and author – the only woman in France earning her living as a professional writer – composed *The Book of the City of Ladies*. It was a utopian dreamscape where female artistry, inventiveness, courage, creativity and thought were revered and celebrated. Behind the walls of her allegorical city, women and their accomplishments – both contemporary and historical – were protected from the rampant misogyny that permeated literature of the Middle Ages. Early in the book, Christine, the narrator, is visited by three virtues in the guise of ladies who guide the creation of her city. With Lady Reason, Christine discusses the "vile and disgusting things" that certain male authors had claimed about women's bodies.

One anonymous offender wrote a popular treatise around the late 13th or early 14th century titled *Secrets of Women* ("De Secretis Mulierium"). Ostensibly, *Secrets of Women* aimed to enlighten celibate monks and churchmen as to "the nature of women" and the female body's mystifying processes. The author covered topics including how embryos are generated, aids and impediments to conception, and diseases of the reproductive organs. But this was no midwifery manual or humane guide to healing. *Secrets of Women* was a punishingly sexist pseudo-medical diatribe. Christine asks Lady Reason what she makes of this "little book in Latin… which states that the female body is inherently flawed and defective in many of its functions". Lady Reason denounces the book as "utter rubbish". "You shouldn't need any other evidence than your own body," she tells Christine, "to realise that this book is a complete fabrication and stuffed with lies."

Secrets of Women, as de Pizan wrote, was "outrageous nonsense". According to the author, women's "infirmities" – his euphemistic term for menstruation – could turn their already weak and defective bodies and minds poisonous and monstrous. A menstruating woman, he asserted, could become so deceitful and vindictive that she would conspire to mortally wound men's penises. Women's imaginations were so impressionable that they could induce deformities in their unborn children if evil images came into their minds during sex.

It's easy today to laugh off the ridiculous beliefs of an unnamed medieval misogynist. But the essential beliefs about female biology that he promoted were not particularly unusual or sensational at a time when intense religious superstition and oppressive gender ideologies permeated medical ideas about women's bodies and minds.

Bitter pill

An advert for medication to treat a range of nerve-related symptoms. Women have been given catch-all diagnoses such as "nervous disorder" for centuries

Since its beginnings in ancient Greece, medical discourse reflected and validated the patriarchal social order. Women's existence was primarily defined by their ability to bear and raise children, so theories about their health and healing centred on their reproductive organs, especially their wombs. The authors of *Diseases of Women* – the foundational texts in the Hippocratic Corpus on the care and treatment of women's illnesses, written in the fifth and fourth centuries BC – described an array of disorders of the womb that could be remedied with marital sex and pregnancy. The healthiest state for women was achieved when obeying their biological destiny and performing their social duty.

The evils of female flesh

By the time the author of *Secrets of Women* gave his ludicrous accounts of the evils of female blood and flesh, theories about the pathological influence of the womb on women's health had been transmitted and translated over centuries. New learning, influenced by religious myths that women's bodies were potentially corrupting and corruptible, was layered upon old. The Hippocratic premise that the female body

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Scathing attack
An illustration from Christine de Pizan's *The Book of the City of Ladies* (1405). In this work, de Pizan criticised medieval beliefs that women's bodies were intrinsically flawed, branding them "utter rubbish"

Baby fever A late 15th-century depiction of a mother breastfeeding her child. For centuries, women's existence was defined by their ability to bear children, so their health was tied to their reproductive organs

BRIDGEMAN

was governed by the biological and social imperative of procreation was reinterpreted according to the pernicious myth of women's destructive and depraved biological nature.

As de Pizan pointed out, these myths flourished because men claimed ultimate authority over medical knowledge about the female body. While women themselves were excluded from medical discourse and practice, and silenced when it came to their own body experiences, harmful and degrading stereotypes like those in *Secrets of Women* spread, unchecked and unchallenged.

Christine de Pizan was one of the first women to publicly call out medical sexism and challenge the way that biological myths and falsehoods were exploited to control women's lives. Today, more than 600 years later, women are still struggling in a medical system that often fails to take them seriously as reliable narrators of what is happening in their own bodies.

The public reckoning with institutional and systemic sexism and misogyny over the past five years has inspired many women to speak out about their experiences of gender discrimination in health and medical care. This follows the landmark 2001 study "The Girl Who Cried Pain: A Bias Against Women in the Treatment of Pain", which explored how women's accounts of their pain and other illness symptoms are routinely minimised and misdiagnosed, and led to the coining of a telling phrase: "gender pain gap".

A menstruating woman could be so vindictive that she would conspire to mortally wound men's penises

Women are the primary sufferers of chronic diseases that cause pain – including endometriosis and autoimmune conditions such as lupus and rheumatoid arthritis – which remain poorly understood, woefully underfunded, difficult to diagnose and complicated to treat. Recent studies have shown that healthcare providers are more likely to perceive women's expressions of pain and other symptoms as exaggerations. Women are also statistically more likely to have their pain dismissed as emotional or psychological than to be referred for further diagnostic investigations.

For black, Asian and ethnically diverse women, whose care and treatment is impeded by diminishing gender stereotypes and racist misbeliefs, these disparities are far greater. The dehumanising assumption that black women were less sensitive to pain than white women was enfolded into medical discourse in the early 19th century. Research shows that such assumptions have persisted as unconscious racial biases which still impact some health professionals' perceptions.

Demanding to be heard

The treatment of unwell women is influenced by a centuries-long legacy of sexist and misogynistic attitudes and assumptions about who women are, what they should feel and how they could live. Throughout history, women have challenged social ideas upheld and enforced by male-dominated medical

culture, and fought against its complicity in silencing, oppressing and punishing women. From the Middle Ages to the 20th century, women campaigned to be allowed to study and practise medicine; they debunked myths about female physical inferiority and biological precarity; and they defended their rights to think, work and live independently, following the trail blazed by Christine de Pizan.

One such was May Edward Chinn, who fought against gender and racial prejudice to become the only practising black female physician in New York's poverty-stricken Harlem district in the 1920s. While caring for marginalised communities, she witnessed the misery of untreated cancer, especially in women, and became determined to improve early detection and diagnostic procedures. Her work during the 1940s and 1950s contributed to the development of the "Pap" smear test that saves the lives of thousands of women every year.

Some of the most important critiques of medical sexism occurred at points in history when questions of women's equality and liberty were brought to the fore. In the late 18th century, the English philosopher and women's rights advocate Mary Wollstonecraft challenged the prevailing social and medical belief that women were emotionally and temperamentally unfit for anything other than domestic confinement and dependence on men. In *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman*, published in 1792, Wollstonecraft criticised theories established over the previous century, which decreed that all women were vulnerable to the dysfunctions of their feeble nerves and spirits. Women's nervous illnesses, she countered, were not caused by some inherent physiological deficiency, but by the stifling conditions of marriage – which medicine posited as the cure, not the cause.

"Weak minds fall a prey to imaginary distress," Wollstonecraft wrote elsewhere, "to banish which they are obliged to take as a remedy what produced the disease." Having seen her sister suffer terribly from post-partum depression that was only relieved when she escaped her difficult marriage, Wollstonecraft spoke from bitter experience.

Phantom of hysteria

Into the 19th century, ideas about female nervous weakness prevailed. The spectre of hysteria was stealthily obscuring objective understanding of women's diseases, and undermining women's expressions of pain and other symptoms of illness, both physical and mental. The notion that women's fragile nerves and unruly emotions had profound effects on their physical health led some physicians to assume that even a disease as devastating as breast cancer could be exacerbated by feelings and fears.

By the end of the century, hysteria had become a catch-all diagnosis for many pathologies of women's bodies and minds – particularly when the cause was mysterious, or the illness evaded a doctor's understanding. Silas Weir Mitchell, the American

In sickness and in health A bride drops her quill before signing her wedding contract in this 1780 painting. Marriage had traditionally been posited as the cure for many female nervous illnesses, but feminist Mary Wollstonecraft argued that the opposite was true

AILING OVARIES AND UNRULY UTERUSES

These four historical (and false) afflictions were believed to ravage women's minds and bodies – and treatments ranged from the bizarre to the downright dangerous

The physician Hippocrates (or possibly Asclepius, the god of medicine) treating a female patient. The Greeks believed the womb "wandered" around the body, causing sickness

1 Wandering womb

In ancient Greek discourse on female bodies and health, including the *Hippocratic Corpus*, many illnesses of the female body were attributed to the womb "wandering" from its rightful place and impacting other vital organs such as the heart and liver. Thought to be caused by the womb becoming dry and stifled from lack of moisture, women who were not having marital sex or bearing children were most vulnerable to afflictions of the "wandering womb".

In the fourth century BC, Plato likened the womb to a creature that hungered for intercourse and conception, while around the second century AD, the physician Aretaeus described it as an "animal within an animal". Although the belief that the womb could wander unbidden was dispelled, these classical physicians set the precedent for centuries of medical theories that placed the womb, and its almost animalistic imperative to procreate, at the centre of discourse about the diseases of women.

2 Ovaritis

Ovaritis was a term used by English gynaecologist Edward Tilt in the mid-19th century to describe a disorder of the ovaries that could lead to hysteria. Ovaritis was most common in middle- and upper-class young women who excited their ovaries with activities including horse-riding, reading, listening to music and too much physical exercise while menstruating. At the time, recent understandings of the role of the ovaries in menstruation, and theories about the sympathy between ovaries and the nervous system, meant attention had shifted away from the uterus as the epicentre of female hysteric illnesses.

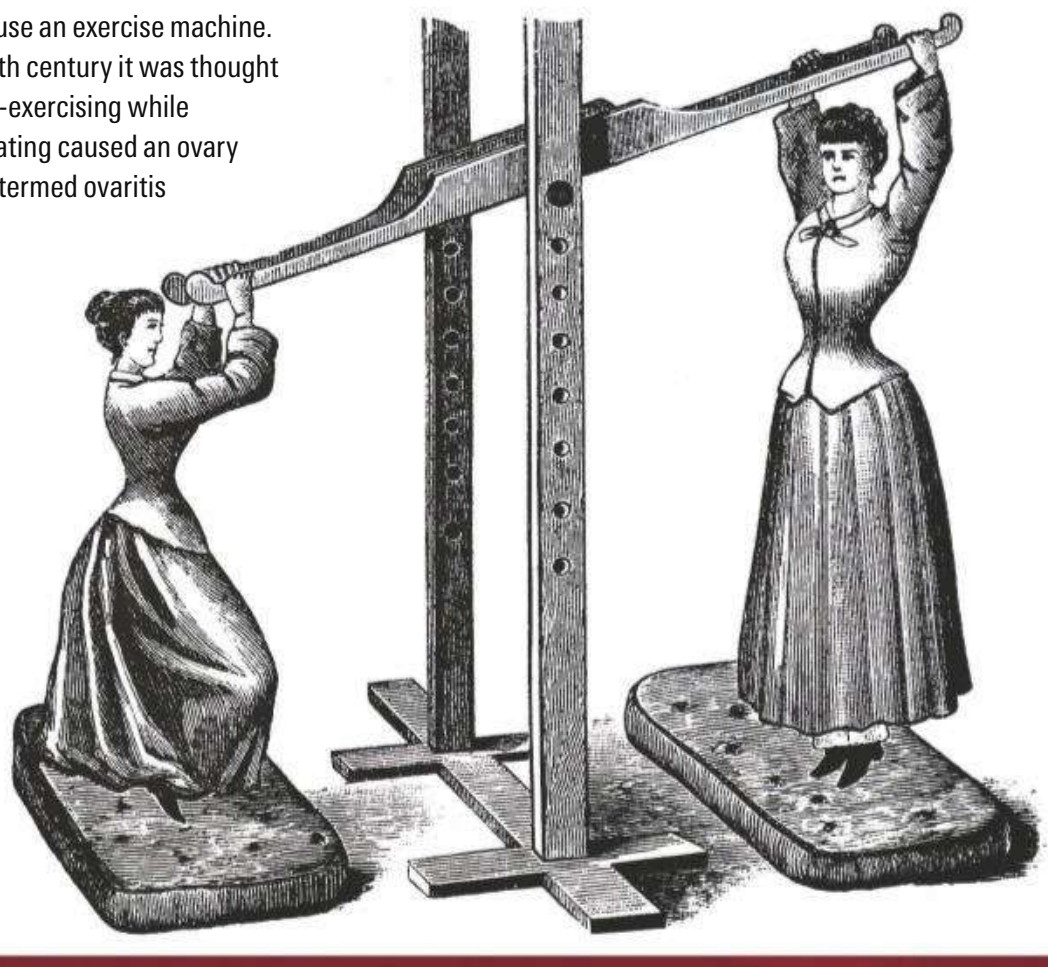
The primacy of the ovaries in emerging theories about women's physical and mental health led to the ovariotomy – surgical removal of the ovaries – becoming popular in both the UK and the US. Ovariotomy was a dangerous and controversial procedure with a high mortality rate. Some surgeons, including Thomas Spencer Wells, prioritised women's safety and limited operations to those suffering life-threatening ovarian cysts and tumours. But others were not so scrupulous; ovariotomy was often performed when no evidence of ovarian disease existed. Needless – and dangerous – ovariotomies were endured by women deemed morally depraved or mentally defective, in public asylums in the UK and the US, in the late 19th century.

3 Hysteria

Derived from the ancient Greek word *hystera*, meaning womb, hysteria was a diagnostic term used from the 17th to the 20th century for collections of physical and psychological symptoms seen almost exclusively in women. Used to pathologise the influence of women's excessive emotions on their already delicate constitutions – and vice versa – the apparent causes of hysteria were variously ascribed to the reproductive organs, the nervous system and the brain from the 17th to the early 20th centuries.

Diagnoses of hysteria also carried the implication that the patient was feigning, exaggerating or embellishing their pain and other symptoms. Moreover, physicians tended to label an illness "hysterical" when they were baffled by its courses and causes. Treatments for hysteria and its associated afflictions were as all-encompassing as its definitions, but many – including stays in asylums, the Rest Cure and gynaecological surgical interventions – were punishing and barbaric.

A patient diagnosed with hysteria at Salpêtrière, a hospital for mentally unwell women in Paris



Women use an exercise machine. In the 19th century it was thought that over-exercising while menstruating caused an ovary disorder termed ovaritis

GETTY IMAGES/ALAMY/BRIDGEMAN/BACKGROUND: WONDERTHEORY

Perplexing cures were suggested for womb fury, such as chess (as shown in a c1860 photograph), no reading and winding a wheel for hours

4 Womb fury

In the late 16th century, and possibly before, *furor uterinus* or "womb fury" – sexual obsession ascribed to uterine agitation – was thought to be caused by corrupt humours emanating from an unruly uterus when it wasn't procreating. Treatments for *furor uterinus* ranged from the predictable – marital sex – to the bizarre, including vaginal fumigation, massages with salt-and-vinegar sprinkled linen, and loudly shouting the patient's name in her ear.

In the 18th century, *furor uterinus* was linked to unmarried women's unrequited desires. Remedies to curb a lascivious imagination – and, by extension, control female sexuality – included, alongside marriage and pregnancy, a morality-improving regimen of bland foods, baths, bloodletting and constant supervision.

When a new gynaecological tool called the vaginal speculum gained popularity in the mid-19th century, some physicians argued that being examined internally could induce sexually obsessive hysteria similar to *furor uterinus*. English ophthalmologist Robert Brudenell Carter believed the speculum would cause young women to become so fixated on their genitals that they would be morally ruined and unmarriageable. His suggestions for taming such illicit attentions – also thought to cause heavy menstrual bleeding and abdominal pain – included chess, astronomy, winding a wheel around for hours and no reading.

neurologist who devised the infamous Rest Cure for nervous disorders, proclaimed in 1875 that hysteria "were as well called mysteria for all its name teaches us of the host of morbid states which are crowded within its hazy boundaries". But while he was questioning the legitimacy of hysteria, Mitchell was also using it as a diagnostic slur to invalidate and belittle unwell women.

After being subjected to the Rest Cure in 1887, the American feminist writer, lecturer and activist Charlotte Perkins Gilman wrote *The Yellow Wallpaper*, a short story that remains one of the most widely read texts on the invalidation and mistreatment of women's pain. Gilman spent months following Mitchell's prescription of complete bed rest with little intellectual or creative activity after she became desperate to cure her severe depression. But this punishing regimen pushed her "near the borderline of utter mental ruin". *The Yellow Wallpaper*, about a woman whose mental health disintegrates after she is confined to bed by her physician husband for a "slight hysterical tendency", was written partly to help women who might be vulnerable to these medical "therapies" and empower them to challenge the presumed authority of male physicians. "It was not intended to drive people crazy," Gilman reflected, in 1913, "but to save people from being driven crazy. And it worked."

Gilman began to recover when she was treated by the pioneering and progressive American physician, scientist and teacher Mary Putnam Jacobi, who believed that symptoms labelled "hysteric" should be treated by stimulating a patient's intellect, not diminishing it. Putnam Jacobi, who campaigned for equality in medical education, had disproved the myth that education and professional occupations were detrimental to women's menstrual and reproductive health. By analysing physiological data gathered from hundreds of women in the 1870s, she showed that study and physical exercise had no impact on women's menstrual health.

Fighting for rights

Arguments around women's right to be educated to the same standard and level as men, and to be admitted to male-dominated professions including medicine, were rife in Britain and the US in the mid to late 19th century. Putnam Jacobi was one of several trailblazing physicians, health experts and social reformers who worked tirelessly from the late 19th through to the early 20th century to dispel accepted medical beliefs that female biology was far too delicate and susceptible to damage for women to pursue lives outside the "separate sphere" of marriage, homemaking and motherhood.

Misunderstood malady A doctor gives a lecture on the manifestations of hysteria as a woman faints beside him. The diagnosis of hysteria often carried the implication that the patient was exaggerating or feigning her pain and other symptoms

A prescription of months of complete bed rest pushed one woman "near the borderline of utter mental ruin"

Tireless trailblazer
Mary Putnam Jacobi (pictured c1860–65) continuously campaigned for equality in medical education and worked to dispel medical myths about female biology

In this article I've highlighted just a few of the incredible physicians, activists, researchers, scientists, rebels, campaigners and patients who fought against the sexism perpetuated and promoted throughout medicine's history. They all exposed and redressed ingrained mythologies about women's bodies, minds and lives that became embedded in discourse on female illness and disease.

In today's gender pain gap, we have inherited the legacy of female health concerns being invalidated, women's pain being misdiagnosed, and women's accounts of being unwell sidelined and distrusted. This gap was forged over centuries of women's symptoms being interpreted through discriminatory beliefs and stereotypes about "female nature". But we have also inherited a legacy of incredible women-led and feminist activism against the misogynistic medical attitudes that have insidiously controlled women's lives. As Christine de Pizan knew more than 600 years ago, and as all those fighting to close the gender pain gap understand today, women need to be trusted as the most reliable narrators of what is happening in their own bodies. H

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Elinor Cleghorn is the author of *Unwell Women: A Journey Through Myth and Medicine in a Man-Made World* (Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 2021). Her Twitter handle is @elinorcleghorn.
Elinor will be appearing on the HistoryExtra podcast to discuss unwell women throughout history: *historyextra.com/podcast*

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A KINGDOM CA

As debates rage over the return of the Benin Bronzes to Africa, **Bronwen Everill** delves into the history of these exquisite artworks and their creators, exploring the flowering of a mighty kingdom – and its ruinous defeat by the British

AST IN BRONZE

Missing treasures
A collection of relief plaques and sculptures, mostly made with brass in the 16th or 17th century in Benin City and now dispersed around the world. Top row (l–r): A Portuguese man with manillas, which were often used as currency; an iyoba (queen mother); a cockerel; a high-ranking official with warriors; the head of an oba (ruler). Bottom row (l–r): royal butchers carrying a sacrificial cow; Oba Ewuare I (ruled 1440–73), whose reign marked the start of Benin's golden age; the "mudfish Oba triad" (mudfish have symbolic importance for Benin people because they can live on land and sea)

ALAMY/GETTY/AKG-IMAGES/BRIDGEMAN/ THE MET FIFTH AVENUE/ETHNOLOGICAL MUSEUM OF BERLIN/MARTEN FRANKEN

As he fled Benin City in February 1897, Oba Ovonramwen looked back to see his royal palace in smouldering ruins. Hundreds of intricate plaques, showing the royal lineage stretching back to the 12th century, had been prised off the palace walls and lay in piles, together with thousands of other precious decorative artefacts that had made his capital a wonder to foreign visitors.

This hoard of treasures – today known as the Benin Bronzes, though including plaques and sculptures made from brass and ivory as well as bronze – was then packed up and taken away by British soldiers. They seized intricately carved elephant tusks, brass castings of the heads of monarchs at least 500 years old, and ivory leopards later given to Queen Victoria, all described by previous visitors as displaying truly "artistic workmanship".

Six months later, after his kingdom had been absorbed into the British empire, Oba Ovonramwen returned to surrender. He found Benin City unrecognisable, its palaces and holy places destroyed and replaced with British administration buildings and a new golf course.

Emperor in absentia Oba Ovonramwen, ruler of the kingdom of Benin, pictured c1905 while exiled in Calabar following the British raid on Benin City in 1897

Back to Benin

The Benin Bronzes taken by the British, later held in museums in London and elsewhere in Europe, as well as America, have long been the subject of great controversy, spawning a proliferation of books, news reports and public enquiries. Pressure to return them to Nigeria, building for decades, recently reached a tipping point. In early 2021, the return of Germany's collections of Benin artefacts – numbering more than 1,000 – was announced, beginning next year. Several museums in Britain subsequently stated their intention to return items taken in the 1897 attack. The return of these items from a variety of collections around the world is gaining momentum (see the box on page 75).

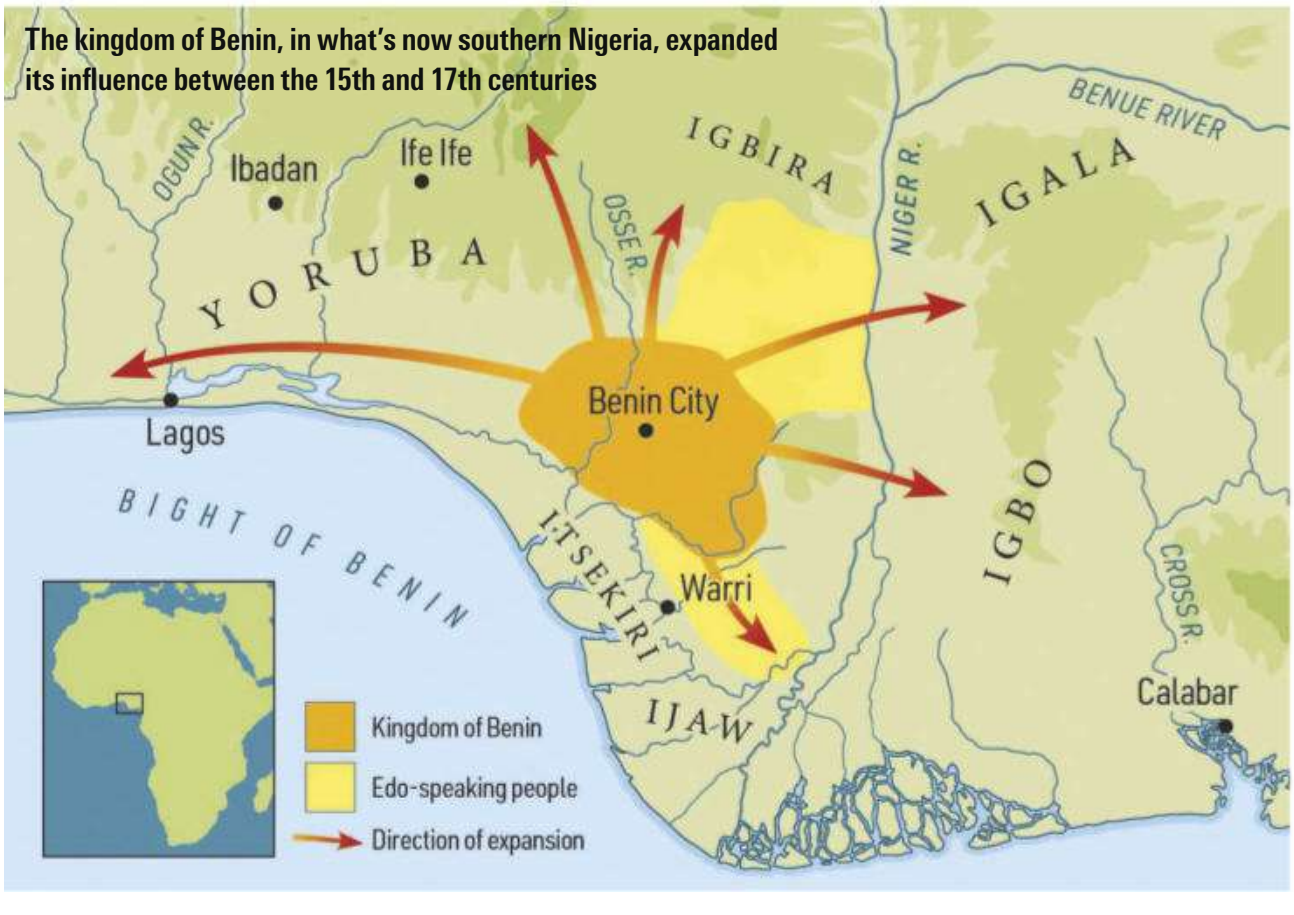
> At its height, Benin was a tributary empire and the major trading power along the Nigerian coast

While this debate continues to rage, though, the history of the kingdom that produced these exquisite artworks has remained relatively obscure outside the region. Yet it's a fascinating story, which began perhaps seven centuries before the British attack.

Ovonramwen was the 36th in a long line of obas, or rulers, of the kingdom (or empire) of Benin in what's now southern Nigeria, east of Lagos; the modern country of Benin, to the west, is unrelated. According to oral history, in the late 12th century, elders of the Edo people turned to the great-grandson of the land's previous ruler to found a new dynasty. Around the end of the 12th and beginning of the 13th century, this new oba, Eweka I, established Ibinu (later translated as Benin by the Portuguese) as his capital

For several centuries, Benin City was governed by an elected oba along with a council of elders. Then, in the 15th century, a prince wrested the throne from his brother, curtailed the power of the elders and renamed the capital Edo. The new oba took the royal name Ewuare, meaning "the trouble has ceased". His reign as Ewuare I (1440–73) augured the start of a period of artistic flourishing and state reform, as well as the consolidation of the power of the oba.

The oba's enhanced role now included sole



The kingdom of Benin, in what's now southern Nigeria, expanded its influence between the 15th and 17th centuries

ALAMY/GETTY IMAGES

Excuse for attack The fatal ambush of a British party by Edo warriors in January 1897, shown in this contemporary illustration, was given as the reason for the punitive expedition in Benin

Regalia restored Oba Eweka II, pictured c1920 surrounded by his subjects. Having succeeded Oba Ovonramwen in 1914, Eweka was presented with the royal coral regalia that had been seized by the British in 1897

authority to mete out capital punishment. As the anthropologist RE Bradbury commented, within the oba's realm, "No one could be put to death without his consent, and any person accused of a capital offence had to be brought before his court." The epithets attached to the oba reflected this role: "Child of the Sky whom we pray not to fall and cover us, Child of the Earth whom we implore not to swallow us up."

Ewuare I launched military campaigns that expanded his realm and the reach of his judicial and fiscal authority, marking the start of a golden age for the kingdom. At its height in the 16th and 17th centuries, Benin was a tributary empire ruling over the western Igbo, eastern Yoruba and coastal Itsekiri, among other peoples, and the major trading power along the Nigerian coast.

European travellers were duly impressed by the flourishing kingdom and its capital. Dutch reports from the 16th and 17th centuries described Edo (Benin City) as "the same size as the city of Haarlem" in the Netherlands. That same account, published in Amsterdam in 1668, said of the royal palace: "Every roof is adorned with a small spired tower on which casted copper birds are standing, being very artfully sculpted."

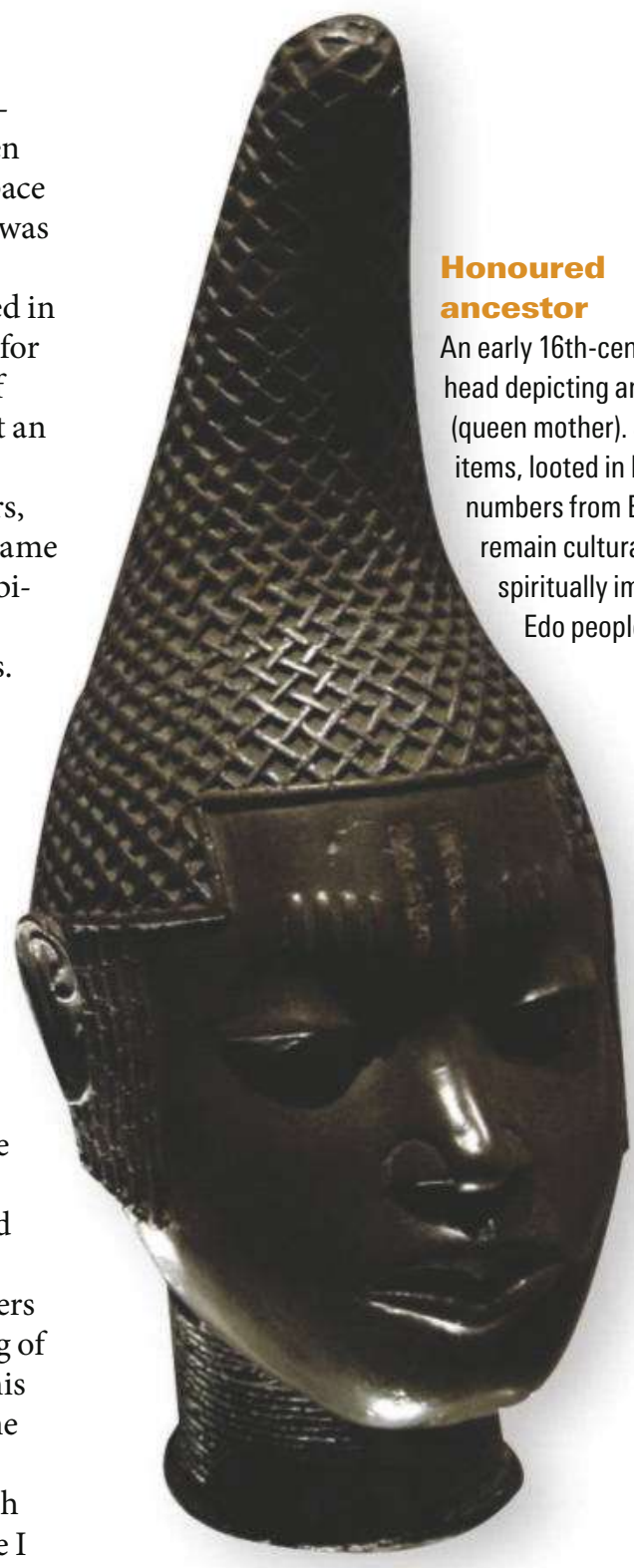
The art of crafts

As an important centre of culture, the city was home to skilled craftsmen who created the ceremonial heads and plaques that honoured the past divine obas and iyobas (queen mothers). Among the artistic techniques cultivated and perfected there was the lost-wax process of casting metal. This involved first making a wax model of a sculpture, then creating a clay mould around it and melting the wax inside. Molten metal was then poured into the clay mould, filling the space left by the melted wax, before the mould was removed to reveal the cast sculpture.

This multi-stage process had been used in neighbouring Igboland and Yorubaland for several centuries before the golden age of production in Benin. It's likely, then, that an existing supply chain of producers and trained artisans – copper and zinc miners, smelters, sculptors and blacksmiths, to name a few – already existed, and could be mobilised to meet the kingdom's increasing demand for the production of such crafts. Royal guilds of woodworkers, leather workers, weavers and potters were also established, making possible the large-scale production of art for the royal court, including the Benin Bronzes.

The increased demand for such works relied not just on skilled craftspeople but also on the availability of wood fuel, clay and wax, which were gathered locally, traded or paid in taxes. As the capital, Edo had the resources to pay for the supplies and labour that made both monumental architecture and fine artistry possible. Such resources included large elephant tusks. Henry Galway, vice-consul of the nearby British Oil Rivers Protectorate, wrote in 1892 that "the king of Benin claims half the ivory obtained in his dominion; when an elephant is killed, one tusk always goes to the king".

Trade with Europeans, beginning with the Portuguese in 1472, provided Ewuare I



Honoured ancestor An early 16th-century brass head depicting an iyoba (queen mother). Such items, looted in large numbers from Benin City, remain culturally and spiritually important to Edo people today

BRIDGEMAN/ALAMY

A REFLECTION OF THEIR CREATORS

What can the Benin Bronzes tell us about the people who made them?

The Benin Bronzes offer historians and archaeologists precious opportunities to better understand the empire in which they were created.

While oral history and artistic heritage have long been central to Benin's understanding of its own past, the first written history of the kingdom of Benin was published by the Edo historian Jacob Egharevba in 1933. His work was refined over decades using historical, archaeological and anthropological insights gained by him and others from artefacts scattered around the world.

The art historian Sweet Ufumwen Ebeigbe, for instance, has used the Benin Bronzes to demonstrate the methods through which west African narrative art, often stylistically quite different from western art traditions, tells the stories of kings. The figures can reveal much about change and continuity in the kingdom, and repeated images in the bronzes show the points of historical reference that Benin's artists were expecting their audiences to understand. For instance, an image of a leopard on royal stools was a reference to the story of Oba Ewuare's escape from one while in exile.

The bronzes can also tell historians about Benin's relationships with European and neighbouring African states. For example, the depiction of Portuguese traders in bronzes from the 16th century can be dated by their clothes and weapons. This can tell historians about when and how such contact was first made, and how ideas about Europeans and their imports were incorporated into Benin's view of its place in the world.

The existence of similar examples in other parts of Nigeria, noted by archaeologists in the 1930s, helps to show the political and cultural connections between Benin and the kingdom of Ife to the north-west. Archaeologist Akinwume Ogundiran has worked to understand that shared material culture, when it dates from and how it developed over time. Meanwhile, historian Ebiegberi Alagoa used the presence of Benin Bronzes in the western Delta region, south-east of Benin City, to argue that there was a long-forgotten history of cultural and political connections between those areas and Benin.

The historian Victor Osaro Edo suggests that state power operated in a constantly shifting balance between the oba, the appointed nobles, the craft guilds and the people, who were able to depose the oba – as they did on several occasions. The number of surviving bronze representations of an oba might indicate perceptions of their rule. Thus the existence of only a few bronzes of one oba might signify displeasure with that ruler's legacy – a form of popular collective condemnation expressed by erasing his memory.

Forging stereotypes
A brass plaque of the 16th or 17th century shows Portuguese men, depicted with sharp noses and long hair, and the metal manillas they traded

> Major exports from Benin included pepper, ivory, palm oil, blue coral and leopard hides

and his successors with access to more metals, as well as weapons that helped them defend their tributary subjects. Benin's traders purchased manillas – brass or copper ingots in the shape of bracelets – from the Portuguese for use in casting, and used that copper to create bronze figures of the Portuguese who'd supplied the metal.

Regional conflict

As Atlantic commerce expanded, the oba controlled trade, permitting transactions only by royally approved associations of merchants. Major exports traded to European merchants included pepper, ivory, palm oil, blue coral and leopard hides gathered within the expanding territory. Benin also occasionally sold people captured during its expansionary wars. The Portuguese then sold these enslaved people in the Gold Coast (modern Ghana) in exchange for gold, which they took back to Europe.

The centralised control of trade was not always popular in the region, despite the protections offered by the oba. The Itsekiri kingdom of Warri, established in the 15th century by a prince from Benin, became increasingly independent and by the 18th century it was established as a trading rival to Benin, specialising in slaves, salt and pottery.

Over time, conflict erupted between various of the groups that fell under Benin's sway, and the kingdom launched military campaigns to retain control over Yoruba and Igbo groups who sought their own trading relationships or new alliances. Olaudah Equiano, the renowned British abolitionist born in Igbo territory in the mid-18th century, noted that, though his place of birth was technically a province of the kingdom of Benin, the "subjection to the king of Benin was little more than nominal".

With the expansion of the Atlantic slave trade in the late 17th and 18th centuries, other coastal kingdoms began to overtake Benin, which experienced a slow, sporadic decline in its ability to command the region

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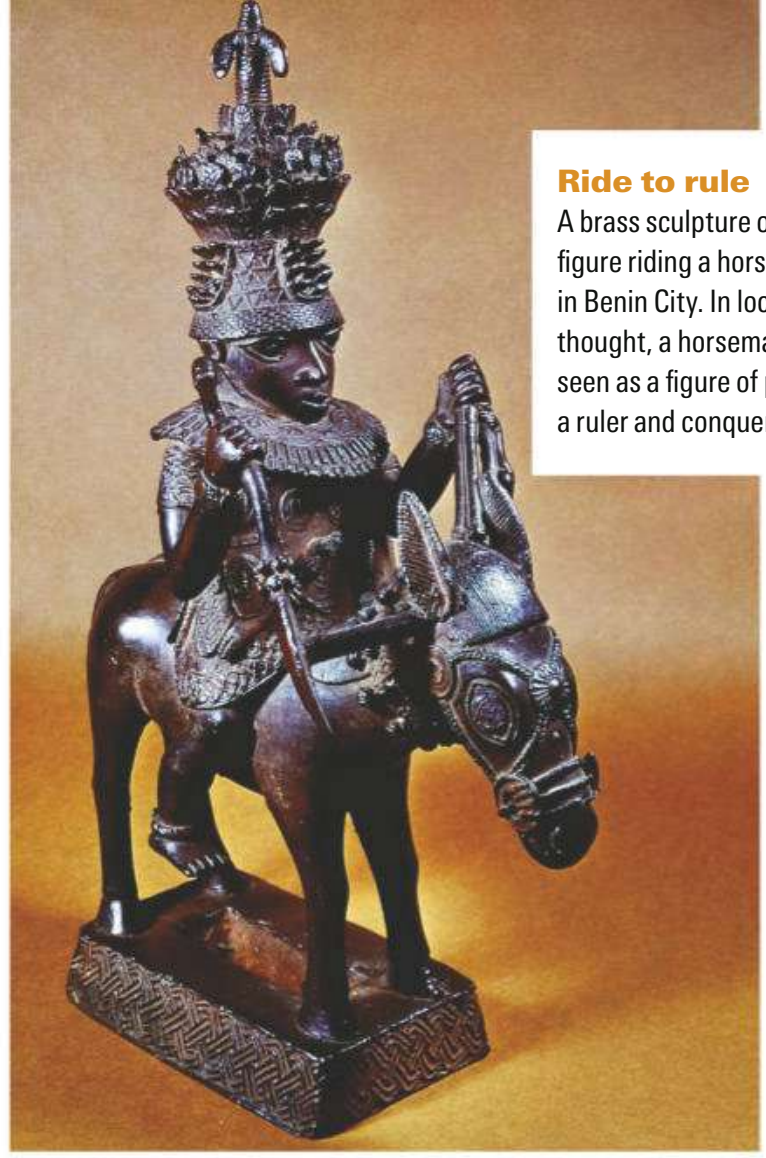
Martial art
A brass plaque made in the 16th or 17th century, showing a high-ranking official flanked by warriors, exhibits a style distinctive to the art of the kingdom of Benin



Ride to rule
A brass sculpture of a figure riding a horse, made in Benin City. In local thought, a horseman was seen as a figure of power – a ruler and conqueror

Ancient craft
An artisan polishes a bronze statuette made using the lost-wax casting process long known in neighbouring regions but cultivated and perfected during the golden age of the Benin empire

that had been under its control. By 1830, as British captain William Fitzwilliam Owen commented, the "falling off in the trade was severely felt by the people of Benin".

From the mid-19th century, British encroachment in the region increased, under the pretext of the abolition of the slave trade. Such actions, particularly the annexation of Lagos in 1861, worried Oba Ovonramwen's predecessor, Adolo (reigned c1848–88). Rather than continuing to negotiate, and fearing that trade would expose Benin to similar gunboat diplomacy, from the 1860s the oba rejected British attempts to negotiate treaties and extend a protectorate over the kingdom. As British explorer Richard Burton – then a consul in west Africa – observed at that time, Benin "seemed to care little for the suspension of trade: it became painfully evident that they could stand the ordeal better than we could". And in the early years of the so-called "Scramble for Africa", the large-scale land grab by European powers that intensified from the 1880s, the kingdom managed to retain its independence.

Rewriting the narrative

Frustrated by the oba's resistance to British rule, in 1862 Burton disparagingly described Benin City as a "place of gratuitous barbarity which stinks of death". Rumours of human sacrifice and slave trading began to circulate in European newspapers. Over time, the glowing reports by Portuguese and Dutch visitors in the 15th and 16th centuries were replaced by a narrative of a barbaric, violent, pagan, absolutist state whose people needed to be either rescued and civilised under colonial rule or wiped out altogether.

In January 1897, a British party led by James Robert Phillips, acting consul-general of the Niger Coast Protectorate, approached the city with the intention of deposing the oba and establishing a British-friendly "native council". Phillips hoped "that sufficient ivory would be found in the king's house to pay the expenses incurred in removing the king".

Warned by the Itsekiri of Phillips' plans, Edo warriors attacked the group, killing the British representatives. Seizing the excuse for a retaliatory punitive expedition, Sir Harry Rawson, admiral of the British naval station in Lagos, attacked the city with 1,200 Royal Marines. Brutal fighting dragged on for 10 days till, on 21 February 1897, the British prevailed and burned Benin City to the ground. An unknown number of Edo people were killed, six chiefs were hanged in the city's central market and, when the oba returned to surrender in August, he was exiled to Calabar.

The British approach to the city's wealth had the air of an unplanned bonanza, with a lack of coherent record-keeping of what was taken and where it went. Some of the looted treasure was sold by Britain's Foreign Office; Dan Hicks, curator of the Pitt Rivers Museum in Oxford, has traced some of the ivory sales to German firms. Lower-ranking officers complained that the senior officers kept the best loot for themselves.

> The British force's approach to the wealth of Benin City had the air of an unplanned bonanza

When the soldiers got back to Britain, the art that had decorated Benin City, and which celebrated a royal lineage stretching back over seven centuries, was sold for profit to private collectors and museums. These artefacts subsequently became separated and dispersed through loss and fire; one was even used as a doorstop by the unsuspecting descendant of a member of the raiding party.

However, the Edo people had not forgot-

GETTY IMAGES

Looted booty British soldiers pose with elephant tusks and artefacts looted from Benin City in the 1897 raid. Many of these items were sold to collections and scattered across Europe and North America

ALAMY/GETTY IMAGES

ten the treasures that had been stolen from them. When Oba Ovonramwen died in exile in 1914, his son and successor took the name Eweka II, harking back to the dynasty's foundation. He rebuilt the royal palace, commissioned new art and, in the 1930s, began to campaign for the return of his city's artistic and cultural heritage. His successors continued these efforts, similarly recognising the impact of their predecessors.

In the 15th century, the reign of Ewuare I saw the development of new artistic forms associated with a growing religious reverence for past obas, with statues and plaques honouring deceased obas and iyobas. Under his reforms, the oba was placed at the centre of both political and religious life in Edo. While he was alive, the oba was divine. In death, he was worshipped along with the gods. Casts of ancestors' heads were, therefore, central to religious life in Edo.

Perhaps recalling that forebear's influence, the current oba, Ewuare II (crowned 2016), chose a name that reflects his ambition to begin a new artistic and diplomatic golden age for his people. It also nods to his hope for the return of the looted Bronzes, which represented his ancestors' long heritage – and were last seen decorating the royal palace in a burning Benin City more than a century ago. H

Bronwen Everill is a lecturer in history and fellow of Gonville & Caius College, University of Cambridge. Her latest book is *Not Made by Slaves* (Harvard University Press, 2020)

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WHAT NEXT FOR THE BENIN BRONZES?

Bronwen Everill addresses the big questions about the future of the kingdom's looted treasures

Where are the Bronzes today?

These artefacts are scattered across more than 161 museums and private collections. Two-thirds of these museums are in Europe; artefacts from the 1897 raid are also held in 38 US collections, museums in Australia, Japan and the United Arab Emirates, and nine Nigerian museums.

What are the arguments against their return?

In the years following the looting, many museums argued that they were ideal repositories for these artefacts, which would be looked after more safely in their care than they would in private collections. Some of the Bronzes were purchased by the museums that currently hold them; others were loaned or donated subject to specific conditions which, those museums say, can make repatriation problematic.

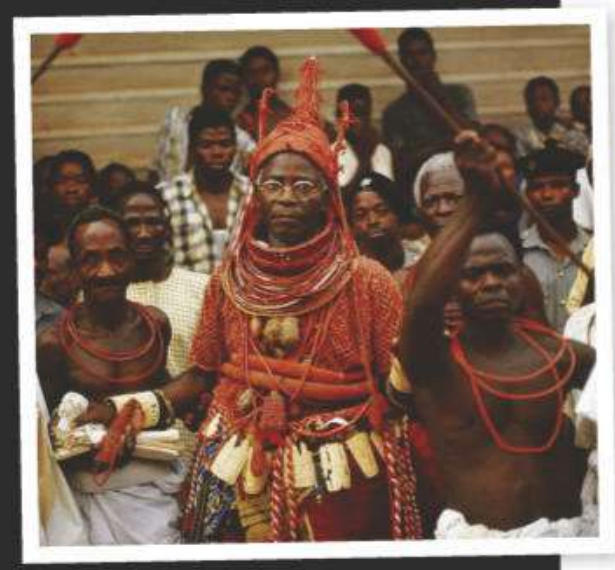
For a long time, experts expressed concerns that there was no suitable museum in Nigeria to house the Bronzes, and debated whether they should be returned to Nigeria or to the current royal court of Benin. Such issues will largely be overcome when a new Edo Museum of West African Art, a collaboration between the Nigerian government and the Benin royal court, opens in Benin City, hopefully in 2025.

What are the arguments for their return?

When Eweka II succeeded Oba Ovonramwen in 1914, the British returned the royal coral regalia. But it was Akenzua II (reigned 1933–78) who started the official movement to repatriate the Benin Bronzes, though only four pieces were returned during his reign. His successors have consistently argued for the restoration of these objects as important elements of their cultural and political heritage.

Scholars based in Nigeria object to the fact that, not only are these important historical objects scattered around the world, but many are in private collections or in storage in museums. They are not on display and thus beyond the reach of local scholars keen to research their history. In addition, stories have come to light of museums accidentally selling off or "losing" Bronzes, undermining the argument that non-Nigerian museums are better at managing Nigeria's cultural heritage.

Those arguing against the Bronzes' return long claimed that they had been acquired during a legitimate war. Not so, says Professor Dan Hicks, curator of Oxford's Pitt Rivers Museum. In *The Brutish Museums* (Pluto, 2020), he outlines his research showing that the raid on Benin City was part of a calculated plan to steal the artworks, destroy the kingdom and violently submit Edo to British rule.



Oba Akenzua II, who started official efforts to repatriate the Bronzes

Have any Bronzes been returned yet, and will others follow them to Africa?

The first of the Bronzes to return arrived in Nigeria in the 1970s. Nigerian museums have also purchased artefacts from private auctions but, with recent prices exceeding $4m for a single piece, this is not a sustainable strategy for reuniting the whole collection. The University of Aberdeen, Berlin Ethnological Museum and several other collections have committed to returning artefacts to Nigeria. It remains to be seen if more will follow.

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INTERVIEW / FERN RIDDELL

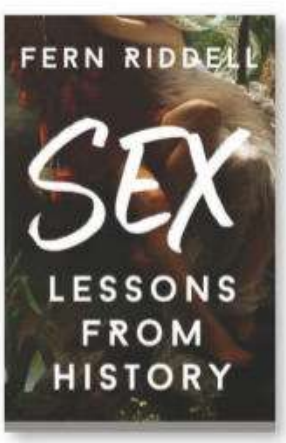
"Our forebears embraced the joy of sex. They had a great time"

FERN RIDDELL speaks to Ellie Cawthorne about her new book, *Sex: Lessons from History*, in which she argues that, when it came to contraception, sexual identities and sheer "animalistic joy", people in the 16th–19th centuries were a lot more progressive than we tend to think

Ellie Cawthorne: What do you think are the main things that we've got wrong about the history of sex?
Fern Riddell: Everything. If you look at what you learned in school, perhaps what you were told by family and friends, by TV and films, there's so little that anyone has got right about sexual culture in the past. For example, we tend to have this belief that everything we do, we do for the first time – that we're the most modern and progressive. But when actually you look at the past, that isn't true at all. There is nothing new, especially in terms of sexual identity. We may be using modern terminology by talking about "sexual identity", and that might not be the way that people in the past would have phrased it, but those identities nonetheless existed.

Every time we talk about gender or sex in the past, it's about how men and women lived by very specific rules, or weren't allowed to do certain things, all because of their gender. That's become a received belief that we need to challenge. I think we really struggle to understand that the ability to reject binary definitions, and not believe you had to fit into a box, existed in the past.

More traditional histories of sex have focussed on legal or religious prescriptions or the work of scientists and sexologists. But you're more interested in everyday sexual culture – songs, commercial products like condoms or sex toys, literature, even bawdy jokes. How does that offer a different perspective?
I get very bored of people proclaiming that you can only understand the past through the systems of power of the day. Because commands from on high don't actually showcase what was normal or widespread at the time – for example, there are an awful lot of people who would say that governmental decisions today do not represent them and their choices. I like to look more at ordinary people getting on with their lives, regardless of what the government or the church might have said. And when you make that switch, you suddenly uncover a completely different historical world. The church may have been telling people that they couldn't have sex at certain times, but after studying sexual culture, I'll tell you that in the privacy of their own homes, most people would say: "Not a chance."



Sex: Lessons from History
by Fern Riddell
(Hodder & Stoughton, 368 pages, £20)

By looking at the experiences of ordinary people, we can also uncover evidence of LGBTQ+ lives being lived as normal. That doesn't mean LGBTQ+ people in the past didn't face difficulty and tragedy, but they also often experienced acceptance and acknowledgement, and that's something we haven't spoken about widely before.

Given that much of this material was not intended for the eyes of historians several centuries later, was it difficult to find sources to study sexual culture?
Not at all! I'd love to claim that I'd uncovered some jewel of an unknown source hidden in an archive, but the majority of the material I studied wasn't remotely hidden from view. We've got nearly 300 years of rich, easily available and widely published print culture to draw on. I looked at public records, song books that had been published consistently for 200 years, and newspapers that were on everyone's breakfast table.

I'll give you an example of the kinds of things we can find in those widely circulated newspapers. In 1864, the papers reported on the case of a teenage housemaid called Emma Devine, who got hauled up before the courts because her boss had accused her of stealing. But when her room was searched they also found an erotic, bawdy song sheet. And the whole trial became about the fact that a teenage girl had a bit of pornography stashed under her bed. Emma stood up for herself – she explained how, along with her friend, she had bought the song sheet from a man who sold them openly on the street corner. What this shows us is a Victorian teenage girl looking for sexual knowledge. And that's what my book is about – showing that sexual knowledge was not something hidden. Rather, everyone talked about it, everyone knew about it.

Where do you think the idea that everyone in the past was sexually repressed has come from?
That's something I've spent a lot of time trying to understand. I think that our attitudes towards sex became incredibly problematic in the early 20th century. The two world wars put tremendous pressures and restraints on people, and when people began to rebuild their societies, they built them back in weird ways. There was a desire to enforce strict social roles and gendered identities on men and women after the war, which saw women's roles as wives and mothers given far greater emphasis, restricting their access to the workplace.

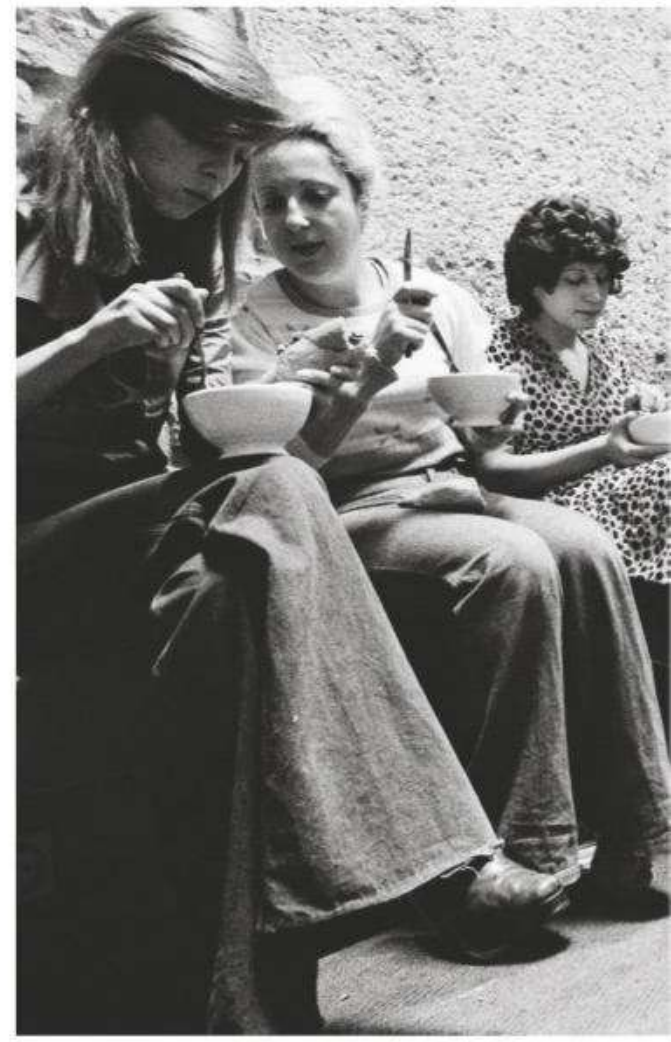
In the 1920s and 30s, there was a massive shift – a post-Edwardian reaction to restrict and restrain knowledge, and to classify people. The boom of psychiatry and the science of the mind meant that sexualities were increasingly medicalised and seen as a psychiatric issue. That coincided with the incredibly destructive emergence of eugenics. All of this combined to remove the ownership, knowledge and joy of sex from ordinary people and turn it into something clinical and medical.

STEVEN CROSS

PROFILE

Dr Fern Riddell is a cultural historian, specialising in sex, suffrage and entertainment in the Victorian and Edwardian eras. Her previous books include *Death in Ten Minutes: Kitty Marion – Activist. Arsonist. Suffragette* (Hodder & Stoughton, 2018) and *The Victorian Guide to Sex* (Pen & Sword, 2014)

Show of affection
Two men embrace in a photo from the 1880s. Fern Riddell has uncovered a history that challenges the idea that gay men's lives in the 19th century were purely ones of persecution and pain



Object of joy
A condom from the early 20th century. Our ancestors' fixation with contraception gives the lie to the belief that they thought that sex was only about reproduction in marriage

So I wouldn't blame our problems on any century prior to the 20th. When you dig into the 16th–19th centuries you find that those people had a great time! They embraced sex and were really concerned about sexual connection. I think we've lost the understanding that sex is about connection. It may be smelly, noisy and funny, but it can also be incredibly joyous and deeply erotic. Instead we're still hung up on the sanitised and medicalised version of sex that emerged in the 20th century. We've really missed out on the whole-hearted embracing of the animalistic joy of sex that happened in every century before our own.

What were you most surprised to discover?
The stories that really stand out for me are those that are complex and complicated. When you talk about the history of gay men's lives, for example, the received understanding for most people is one solely of persecution, pain, terror and horror.

But one of the things that I found most amazing, especially as a 19th-century specialist, was looking at the Victorian Old Bailey records. It absolutely blew my mind because the 19th century is generally remembered as this period of intense, horrific persecution of gay men, and yet the reality is more complex. From the 1830s through to the 1880s, in pretty much every case I've found of consensual sex between two men, they are found not guilty. You find that if two men who are clearly in a relationship together are brought before the courts, they won't be prosecuted for homosexual acts, but only for getting caught in a public place like a park or a field. That completely shifted my understanding of how society saw these men. If you have a legal system that isn't convicting gay men, or putting them in jail, then you start to unpick what the reality of sexual culture and gay culture was at this time.

The 1885 Labouchere Amendment marked the first time that gay relationships – holding hands, kissing your partner, falling in love with another man – were ever illegal on our statute books. And I think that the horror and the damage of the period that followed has become the entirety of received historical identity for gay men today. But we also need to be able to showcase gay lives in the past where they were acknowledged and accepted. Because no one should have a one-dimensional view of their history.

How have attitudes to selling sex changed over time?
It's a complex area that people have very strong opinions over, but I think we have become far more prudish about sex work. When we look at people in the past, the acceptance and acknowledgement of sex work was very common.

One moment in the history of sex work that stands out for me, is the amazing fight by sex workers to be heard and seen in the 1970s. The denial of sex workers' agency is one of the biggest mistakes I think people have made when studying this subject. If you have a historical source from say the 18th or 19th century, in which a woman is saying she enjoys her life as a sex-worker, how can you deny her right to assert her own agency and state that she's happy with her choices?

We need to understand that women had very limited options at that time. In the past, some women involved in sex work could have had more freedoms than many other women, in terms of finding some form of independence, their ideas and their attitudes and making a name for themselves. That's tough to understand for a lot of

"Sex can be incredibly joyous and deeply erotic. Today we're still hung up on the sanitised and medicalised version of it that emerged in the 20th century"

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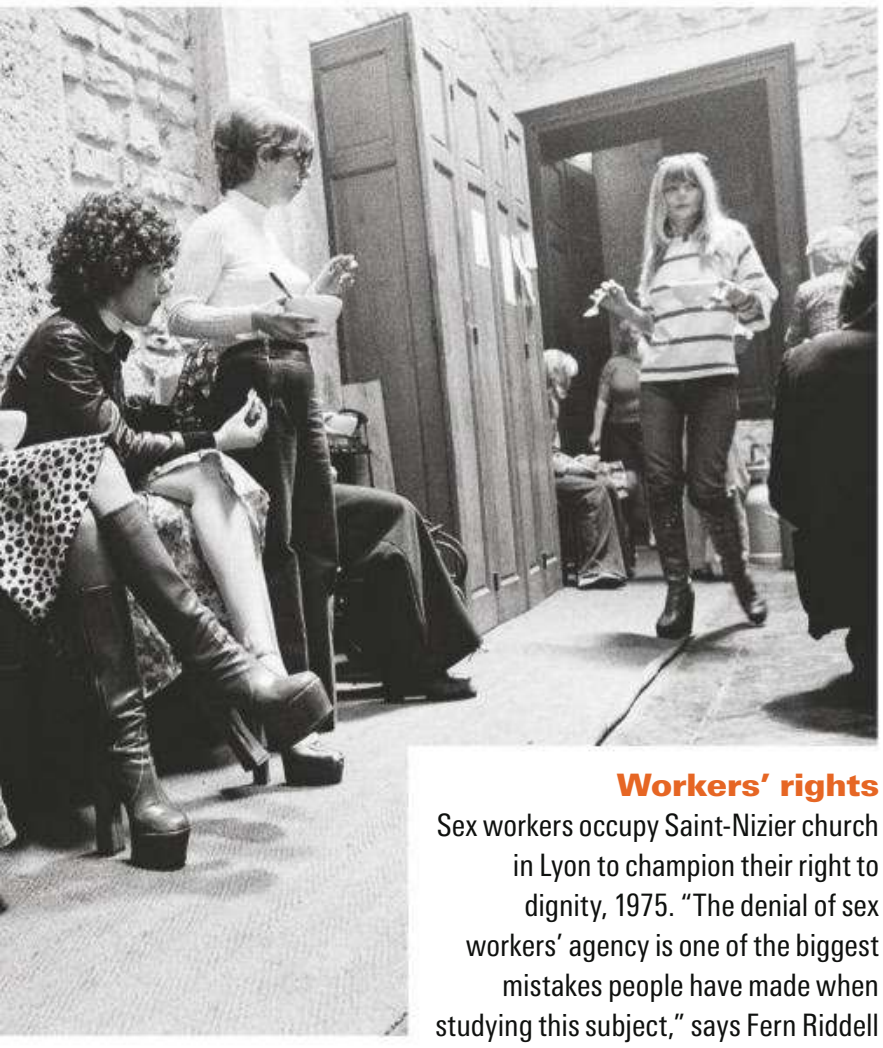
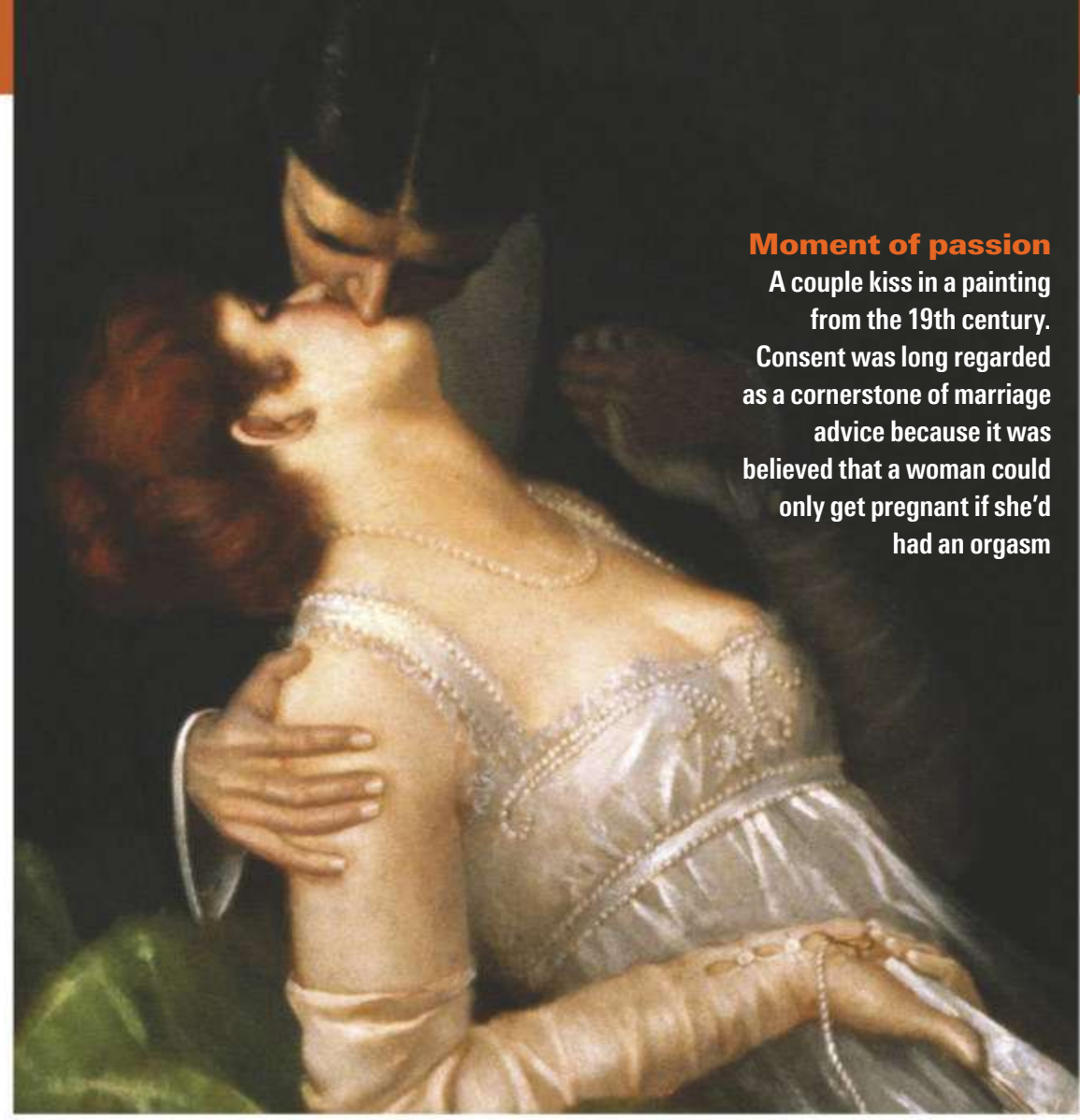


Workers' rights
Sex workers occupy Saint-Nizier church in Lyon to champion their right to dignity, 1975. "The denial of sex workers' agency is one of the biggest mistakes people have made when studying this subject," says Fern Riddell



Moment of passion
A couple kiss in a painting from the 19th century. Consent was long regarded as a cornerstone of marriage advice because it was believed that a woman could only get pregnant if she'd had an orgasm

people who view sex work as purely victimhood – something that women need to be rescued from. I think that one of the worst things we can do as historians is deny the agency of those in the past because it doesn't fit our view of what agency should be, or because we disagree with someone's choices. You can say you disagree with what they did, but you can't erase it, you have to acknowledge it.

You also highlight the fact that the history of contraception stretches further back than we might expect…
The history of contraception is one of the most important things to understand when you're seeking to illuminate attitudes to sex in the past. If you think sex was only about reproduction within marriage, then it's hard to explain why everyone was obsessed with how not to get pregnant, or get a sexually transmitted disease.

One of the things I love about the history of contraception is that the very moment someone claims that everyone was sexually repressed in the past, you can say: "You know there was a widely known condom shop in 17th and 18th-century London? You know we have first-hand accounts of men who would take their sheep-gut condoms to be washed by the laundry woman? And you know that 18th and 19th-century agricultural almanacs for housewives would include instructions for how to make your own sheep-intestine condoms?" Contraception was something that was written about and discussed by both men and women. In 1877, the women's rights activist Annie Besant published a book on every form of contraception available, and even went to court to defend it.

How have ideas about consent changed over time?
Consent is one of the most difficult issues to unpack as a historian. As far as the Victorians – and people of the 18th and the 17th centuries – were concerned, consent was the most fundamental part of any sexual encounter. It must not happen any other way.

That was certainly the case in guides for married couples, which were widely printed and shared as pamphlets in the 17th–19th centuries. There's a wonderful pamphlet printed in 1860 on the "Art of Begetting Handsome Children". It's obviously been ripped from an early modern physician's guide to sex, constantly reprinted and shared for centuries. And the whole purpose of the pamphlet is to tell you how to have sex for the first time on your wedding night, from why it's important to the art of foreplay and how to make your wife have an orgasm. And the thing that is described as absolutely key to this is to never "surprise" or "pounce on" your wife, because that would damage the womb. The idea is that the womb wouldn't have time to relax, meaning that the woman is not going to get pregnant.

Everything that I have ever read to do with having good and safe sex across the centuries has been fundamentally tied to the idea of consent. Because people absolutely believed – and this is one of the facts that really blew my mind when I first learned it 10 years ago – that a woman could only get pregnant if she had an orgasm. The standard bit of sex education everyone learned in the centuries before us was the importance and the power of the female orgasm. And because the female orgasm was so important, consent was equally important. A woman being comfortable, happy and relaxed… these were all deemed key to making sure she was going to have an orgasm and therefore get pregnant.

A lot of these issues – gender and sexual identities, consent and sex work – are subjects that still provoke debate and discussion. How can reflecting on their history help us approach conversations that we're currently engaged in?
The past is not a perfect place. If you go looking for someone exactly like you in the past, you are never going to find a person who shares and cherishes all your ideas and values. In fact, many of the figures I look at in the book are incredibly problematic. But just because their values don't exactly align with ours, it doesn't mean that those diverse identities weren't there. If history teaches us anything, it's that the world has always been made up of a wide spectrum of people. And I think that's a really powerful thing to be able to show.

It's incredibly important for us to understand that there is nothing new, that every type of person has existed before. The job now is for our own society to acknowledge, support and accept the wide spectrum of people who live within it. And that's a battle we're still fighting. H

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Listen to an extended version of this interview with Fern Riddell on our podcast soon at **historyextra.com/podcast**

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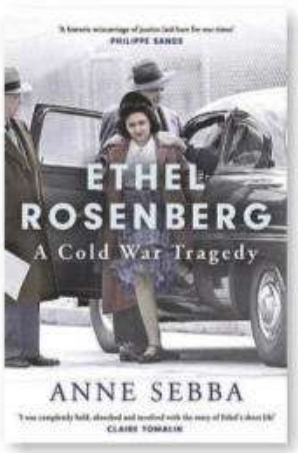
Ideological conviction
Julius and Ethel Rosenberg, as seen in their FBI mugshots, 1951. Anne Sebba's book draws on new research to cast fresh light on Ethel's trial and execution

COLD WAR

Treachery and betrayal

GILES MILTON considers a gripping profile of Ethel Rosenberg, a US woman executed in 1953 for spying for the Soviet Union despite shaky evidence and an international outcry



Ethel Rosenberg: A Cold War Tragedy
by Anne Sebba
Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 304 pages, £20

On a sultry summer's evening in June 1953, a woman named Ethel Rosenberg was prepared for execution in the high-security Sing Sing prison in New York state. She displayed a steely composure as she was strapped into the electric chair, closing her eyes as the electrodes were attached to her head. She had vowed to die "with honour and dignity", but the execution did not go according to plan.

After three massive charges had been sent through her organs, her seemingly lifeless body was lifted from the chair. But prison doctors were horrified to notice that her heart was still beating, so she was strapped back into the chair and given a further two bolts of electricity. It took an agonising four and a half minutes before she was finally pronounced dead.

The execution of Ethel Rosenberg was notable for its grim horror, as well as for the fact that she was one of very few women in the US to be put to death for a crime other than murder. Even more sensational was the trial that preceded her execution, which had turned her case into a global cause celebre.

The international media was gripped by the deliberations of New York's South District Federal Court. The charge itself was straightforward: Ethel Rosenberg stood accused of spying for the Soviet Union, typing up documents stolen from the US military by her husband and his network of communist agents. These were then passed to a Soviet handler in New York, who forwarded them to Moscow. The trial took place at the beginning of the Cold War; little wonder, then, that it received such coverage in the press.

But there were unsettling problems with both the evidence used in the trial and the likely punishment. The evidence submitted by the prosecution was dependent upon statements from untrustworthy witnesses, while the punishment – execution – was highly emotive. Rosenberg was the mother of two young children, aged 10 and six, who would be left as orphans if she and her husband were executed.

The story of this strangely fascinating couple begins in the 1930s, when Ethel and her new husband, Julius, developed a passion for communist ideology. Julius Rosenberg became a card-carrying member

ALAMY

of the Communist Party USA, and openly sold its newspaper, the *Daily Worker*. Ethel was equally fervent in espousing the communist cause.

Their political allegiance was not a problem during the war years: after all, the US was in a military alliance with the Soviet Union, and providing vast quantities of hardware to Stalin via the Lend-Lease programme. But the Rosenbergs' enthusiasm for communism was to become increasingly problematic in the postwar period when the Soviet Union flipped from friend to foe.

"On one side are Americans," wrote US politician George Murphy, "on the other side are the communists and socialists." This divide was to prove perilous for the Rosenbergs, because Julius had been passing secrets to the "other side".

Some of these secrets had been supplied by Ethel's brother, David Greenglass, who was working at America's secret nuclear facility at Los Alamos National Laboratory. Greenglass passed classified information to Julius Rosenberg, who then gave it to a Soviet handler named Alexander Feklisov. Rosenberg handed over other military intelligence as well, most of it obtained from his communist friends and sympathisers.

Julius Rosenberg's world began to unravel in 1950 when Klaus Fuchs and Harry Gold were arrested, both of whom had been spying for the Soviets. Gold identified Greenglass as one of his sources. Greenglass, in turn, named Julius as being central to the spy ring. All were in danger of lengthy prison sentences and even execution.

But what of Ethel Rosenberg? Biographer and writer Anne Sebba has dug deep in the archives, and here sheds new light on the day-to-day life of this caring, hard-working mother. Ethel was certainly no Bond girl: dowdy and rather unimaginative, she aspired to have a comfortable home and a happy family, albeit one that fervently believed in communist ideals.

Much of the book focuses on what was to prove the trial of the century – a gripping tale of betrayal, deceit and judicial incompetence. The extent of Ethel's role in her husband's spy ring remains open to question. Recent evidence suggests that she was at the very least implicated, if not directly involved, in his espionage. But at the time of the trial the prosecution admitted that the case against her was not strong.

It was dramatically strengthened, though, when David and Ruth Greenglass (her brother and sister-in-law) changed their original story in order to incriminate Ethel and thereby save themselves. In this, they were partially successful. All charges against Ruth were dropped, while David escaped with a lighter sentence than he might otherwise have expected.

Sebba presents the trial in admirable detail, revealing the unfolding drama of Ethel and Julius Rosenberg's downfall. They were let down, in part, by their inadequate lawyers, who ought to have demolished the false testimony of the Greenglasses. But they also faced a hostile judge and attorney who were determined to see them both found guilty and executed.

An additional problem was the climate of the times. The trial and sentencing came at a time of anti-communist hysteria in America, when Senator Joseph McCarthy was leading his witch-hunt against supposedly subversive elements in society. Even so, with luminaries and celebrities across the globe rallying to her cause, Ethel might yet have escaped the death penalty. Picasso, Einstein and Pope Pius XII pleaded for mercy, along with 3 million petitioners who sent letters to the White House. Renowned philosopher and writer Jean-Paul Sartre went so far as to write an excoriating article for *Libération* newspaper, accusing the US of criminal folly: "You are afraid of the shadow of your own bomb,"he mocked.

> **"Much of the book focuses on what was to prove the trial of the century – a gripping tale of betrayal, deceit and judicial incompetence"**

Despite these efforts, Ethel was doomed by the treachery of her brother and sister-in-law. President Eisenhower refused all pleas for clemency, perhaps because he knew that more than 70 per cent of Americans wanted to see both husband and wife put to death.

At one level, Ethel Rosenberg's story is one of a naive mother and wife executed for a crime she may or may not have committed. But it is also a terrifying indictment of the US legal system, determined to convict an alleged spy on the flimsiest of evidence. One can only hope that such a glaring subversion of justice would not be repeated today. H

Giles Milton is a writer and historian, whose most recent book is *Checkmate in Berlin: The Cold War Showdown that Shaped the Modern World* (John Murray, 2021)

"It's all about the story"

Dominic Sandbrook on writing history for a young audience

The story behind my new series for children, *Adventures in Time*, is simple. In the autumn of 2019 I took my son to the Imperial War Museum in London. Afterwards we made the inevitable trip to the gift shop and I promised to get him a book about the Second World War. But the right book – gripping enough to keep his attention, with a clear narrative, colourful characters and lots of memorable details – didn't seem to exist. And right then the idea for the series flashed into my mind.

The first two books, *The Second World War* and *The Six Wives of Henry VIII* are out this summer, with six more to follow. In a way this is quite an old-fashioned project, telling rollicking historical stories for readers aged about 8–12. But these are books for 21st-century children who already enjoy *Harry Potter* and *Star Wars*, not dusty relics.

Although I've written eight history books for adults, *Adventures in Time* has been the most enjoyable literary challenge of my life. The characters – Hitler, Churchill, Henry VIII – might be familiar to us, but many children will be encountering them for the first time. The sense of narrative drama is crucial: most of my young readers won't know that the British escape from Dunkirk, that Anne Boleyn ends up on the block or that the Germans' plan to invade Russia goes disastrously wrong.

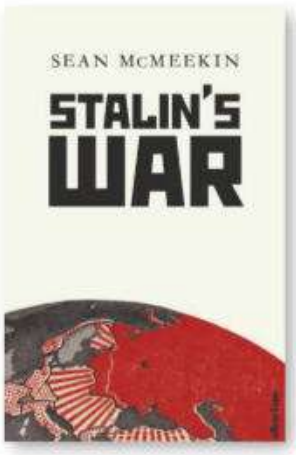
And all the time, one principle has dominated my thoughts. A child reader will never forgive you for being boring. So from the first page to last, I've tried to make the books as exciting as possible. As every young reader knows, it's all about the story.

Adventures in Time: The Six Wives of Henry VIII / The Second World War
by Dominic Sandbrook
Particular Books, £14.99

SECOND WORLD WAR

A deal with the devil

ROGER MOORHOUSE recommends an eye-opening book that suggests we look past our fixation on the Nazis to consider the role of Soviet leader Josef Stalin in the Second World War



Stalin's War
by Sean McMeekin
Allen Lane, 848 pages, £40

To most in the west, the Second World War is synonymous with Adolf Hitler. It was the German dictator whose invasion of Poland began the European war in 1939, and whose death in spring 1945 effectively ended it.

That rather myopic view has been increasingly challenged in recent years, though, and this remarkable book by US academic Sean McMeekin could be seen as the apogee of that revisionist position. McMeekin suggests that we should not only take a broader view, both geographically and chronologically, but also that we should divert some of the energy expended in examining Hitler's motivations to divining those of Soviet leader Josef Stalin. The results are surprising. Far from portraying Stalin as the avuncular, pipe-smoking "Uncle Joe" of Allied wartime propaganda, this book instead shows him as a master schemer, a totalitarian dictator in perpetual conflict with the capitalist world in pursuit of his goal of spreading communist revolution.

McMeekin demonstrates Stalin's strategic genius, his global ambition and his expert manipulation of friends and foes alike. Only the "public relations miracle" of Operation Barbarossa in 1941 brought him into the Allied fold, his crimes duly forgotten – and then, McMeekin suggests, he deftly milked his new allies for everything he could. All the while, his spies were keeping him informed of the west's most closely guarded secrets. Consequently, despite his murderous record and odious collusion with Hitler, it was Stalin who emerged as the primary victor of the Second World War, his frontiers extended, his sphere of influence enlarged, his own status unassailable.

It is a convincing interpretation, albeit not without a few shortcomings. As is the case with many historians pushing a thesis, McMeekin occasionally overestimates the strength and cunning of his protagonist,

Plotting a course A 1941 propaganda poster depicting Stalin steering the Soviet Union through the turmoil of the Second World War. Sean McMeekin's book sheds new light on the leader's tactics and motivations

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> **"McMeekin's central point – that the weak western Allies were obliged to embrace Beelzebub in order to defeat the devil – should surprise no one"**

rather than acknowledging the fundamental weakness of his opponents. His suggestion that the Allies should have intervened during the 1939–40 Winter War in Finland, for instance, is a little fanciful, not least because the British and the Poles would fail so grievously in their intervention at Narvik during the Norwegian campaign. Moreover, surely *all* players during this profoundly existential conflict were motivated primarily by realpolitik? Accusing Stalin of perfidious self-interest – even where it is evidently true – seems a little unfair.

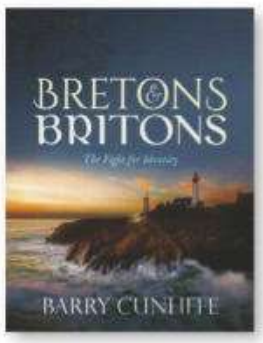
For those raised on the all-pervasive western obsession with Hitler and the depredations of the Nazis, McMeekin's meticulously researched, elegantly written book is a healthy corrective. It's a reminder that the seminal clash of the war in Europe, the monstrous German-Soviet slaughter on the eastern front, was really little more than a gangster squabble to determine who would emerge as boss. His central point – that Stalin was far from the innocent party in the slide to war in 1939, that he was no less ruthless and murderous than the man he helped defeat, and that the weak, circumspect western Allies were obliged to embrace Beelzebub in order to defeat the devil – should surprise no one, but inevitably will.

Yet *Stalin's War* is that rare thing: a book that forces us to think again, and to challenge our narrative of that most well-trodden subject. It is a welcome reminder that perspective is everything. After all, the history of the Second World War war looks very different when viewed from Warsaw, Riga or Seoul. H

Roger Moorhouse's books include *Poland 1939: The Outbreak of World War II* (Basic Books, 2020)

EUROPE

Coast to coast



Bretons and Britons: The Fight for Identity
by Barry Cunliffe
OUP, 488 pages, £25

When a group of Breton farmers purchased a freight ship in the early 1970s, they wanted to ship two commodities to the UK: cauliflowers and artichokes. With their vegetable cargo unloaded in Plymouth, they soon realised that there was money to be made in bringing back tourists from Britain to holiday in Brittany. Thus Brittany Ferries was born – a recent example of cross-Channel links between the Breton peninsula and Ireland and the western side of Britain.

Earlier Breton-British links are explored in this excellent book written by world-leading archaeologist Barry Cunliffe, who has excavated key sites on both sides of the Channel. He shows us how a well-connected society based on metalworking developed in the Bronze Age. What is now known as the English Channel came alive with hide and plank-built boats, and "sustained social intercourse on a much more intensive scale" spanned the sea. This gave way to more regionally differentiated cultures in Britain and Brittany as iron replaced bronze as the metal of choice in the first millennium BC.

Cross-cultural currents Île-de-Bréhat, a small archipelago off the Breton coast. Barry Cunliffe's latest book explores the ways in which Brittany has interacted with Britain across many centuries

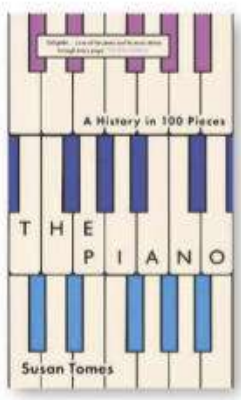
With the arrival of the Romans, everything changed again. Brittany, and then Britain, became part of the Roman empire. A new cross-Channel network was born as that empire fractured and immigrants from Britain sought sanctuary in Brittany – hence the peninsula's modern name. Cunliffe notes that the Brittonic Celtic language then spoken in places including Devon, Cornwall and south-west Wales became established in Brittany in the fifth and sixth centuries, which suggests to him that the newcomers became a dominant force.

In time, as Brittany became part of France, the landward link to the east superseded maritime connections to Britain. In recent centuries, though, the Celtic identity has become an important cultural force, linking Brittany, Ireland and the western side of Britain anew. Cunliffe's Celtic coda explains how this identity was reborn – a fitting conclusion to an excellent book that tells the long story of cross-Channel connections from prehistory to the present. H

David Musgrove, content director of *BBC History Magazine* and co-author (with Michael Lewis) of *The Story of the Bayeux Tapestry: Unravelling the Norman Conquest* (Thames and Hudson, 2021)

CULTURAL

Key moments



The Piano: A History in 100 Pieces
by Susan Tomes
Yale, 400 pages, £16.99

When Bartolomeo Cristofori developed his prototype pianoforte in the early 18th century, it seems unlikely he could have imagined what a success his instrument would become. The piano is now a staple of concert halls around the world and a familiar presence in many a home. Even during the time this book was written in 2020, *The New York Times* reported that domestic piano sales were up. Our love affair with the 88-keyed instrument continues to flourish.

Its story has been often told, so any new history needs to offer fresh perspective. Pianist and writer Susan Tomes is well placed for the job. In a similar vein to Neil MacGregor's landmark 2010 BBC Radio 4 series *A History of the World in 100 Objects*, she explores the piano's history through 100 musical pieces. Most major western classical composers have written for the piano since its invention, so there's a wealth of music to choose from; this book could have been filled in many different ways.

Tomes' illuminating chronological selection draws on her personal taste, yet also neatly traces important social, artistic and technological moments in the piano's history. Sixty-three composers are featured, from German Baroque master JS Bach to feted present-day musician Thomas Adès, plus two groups of composer-performers: bebop pianists and "women jazz pianists in a man's world". In fact, several female composers are restored to their rightful place in piano history, though a true counter-narrative still waits to be written.

Each entry stands alone, but reading them in order reveals a rich web of artistic influence, even if the effect is a little like overdosing on concert programme notes. Best of all are the fascinating details that Tomes' performing experience yields: the physical pleasure of playing Scarlatti's sparkling sonatas, for instance, or the difficulty of conveying Schumann's rhythmic games to an audience. At these moments, her love for the music really brings it to life in words. H

Rebecca Franks, writer and critic who covers classical music for *The Times*

GETTY IMAGES

MONARCHY

Becoming Queen

SARAH GRISTWOOD explores a major new biography of Elizabeth II that pays particular attention to how her formative years have shaped her reign

The Queen
by Matthew Dennison
Apollo, 512 pages, £25

To write the life of Elizabeth II poses several problems – especially in the present moment. A key issue is the sheer length of that life and reign, providing a wealth of material that makes in-depth coverage of the whole a matter of several volumes or an impossibility.

Matthew Dennison, acclaimed biographer of figures from Beatrix Potter to Livia, wife of Roman emperor Augustus, tackles this problem by concentrating on the story of the girl who became the Queen. In a text of some 500 pages, it's page 100 before we reach the abdication that set her father onto the throne as George VI, and we're virtually halfway through before her accession.

Dennison dwells on such details as the pair of dolls that the French government gave to princesses Elizabeth and Margaret in the summer of 1938. These playthings came lavishly equipped with accoutrements including beach pyjamas and country tweeds; dresses for the morning, for Ascot, and for aperitifs; gloves and macintoshes; 20 miniature bottles of scent; and a swagger coat of baby leopard – "in total, £5000 worth infant-sized French finery".

Every biographer of the Queen has to make these decisions, of course. The political writer Ben Pimlott went the other way 25 years ago, expending less than 10 per cent of his text on the years before the Second World War. And Dennison touches skilfully on the fascinating dichotomy of a life lived in public and Elizabeth's private identity, couching her life in terms of a fairy story.

The justification for the pages spent on the early years is how their dominant lesson – adhering to the template set by her grandfather George V – would come to define Elizabeth's sovereignty. The late Prince Philip, the moderniser, is briskly summed up as "a sensitive bully, ripe for iconoclasm".

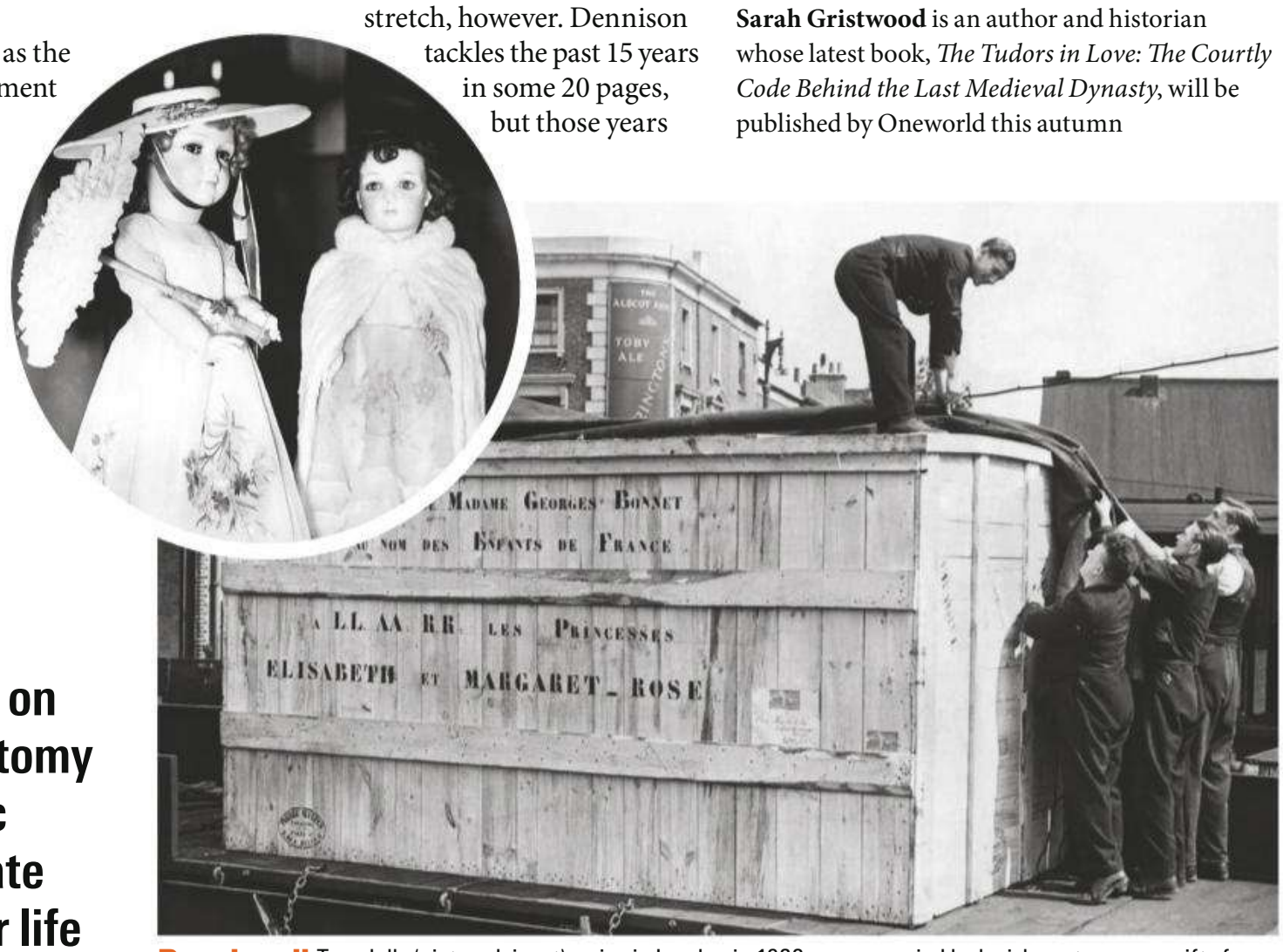
Dennison's extensive research throws up fresh and unfamiliar details. He displays his political chops in his handling of, for example, the Suez crisis and, though his view of the Queen is overwhelmingly supportive, he raises issues where necessary.

The book gets into difficulties in its final stretch, however. Dennison tackles the past 15 years in some 20 pages, but those years have seen an awful lot of water pass under the bridge: the coming to the fore of a new generation and the withdrawal of some of the old; a shifting in the balance of power within the royal family; and a reassessment of the family's popularity.

It is the author's bad luck that a veritable flood of such changes has overtaken the royals even since the completion of his book, which ends by describing the addresses made to the nation by the Queen during the first months of the pandemic in the spring of 2020. Since then Oprah Winfrey's interview with the Duke and Duchess of Sussex, and the death of Prince Philip, have sparked widespread debate that extended beyond those events themselves to query the future of the monarchy and, by implication, the Queen's legacy. It's hard, then, to avoid coming away with a sense of disappointment that Dennison does not tackle those questions to a more significant degree. H

Sarah Gristwood is an author and historian whose latest book, *The Tudors in Love: The Courtly Code Behind the Last Medieval Dynasty*, will be published by Oneworld this autumn

"Dennison touches on the fascinating dichotomy of a life lived in public and the Queen's private identity, couching her life in terms of a fairy story"



ALAMY/GETTY IMAGES

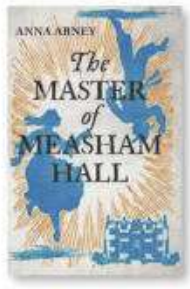
Royal mail Two dolls (pictured, inset) arrive in London in 1938, accompanied by lavish costumes, as gifts from France to princesses Elizabeth and Margaret. This episode is highlighted in Matthew Dennison's new biography

ALSO ON THE BOOKSHELF

WORDS BY **ELLIE CAWTHORNE** AND **MATT ELTON**

FICTION

The Master of Measham Hall
by Anna Abney
(Duckworth, 304 pages, £14.99)



Homeward bound

Opening in a plague-ridden London still bearing the scars of civil war, this novel follows Alethea Hawthorne's quest to return to her ancestral home in Derbyshire – a long and dangerous trek across a country riven with division, conflict and pestilence. It's set to be the first in a 17th-century historical fiction series by Anna Abney, one of the last descendants of the family who lived in the real Measham Hall.

ARCHAEOLOGY

Jungle: How Tropical Forests Shaped the World – and Us
by Patrick Roberts
(Viking, 432 pages, £25)

Back to our roots

We tend to think of jungles as dark places, inhospitable to human life. But this sweeping new history spanning millions of years argues that tropical forests' role in the human story has been overlooked. From "the leafy cradles of our ancestors" to ancient cities that flourished in the jungle, archaeologist Patrick Roberts invites readers to reconsider humanity's relationship with this fascinating habitat.

BRITAIN

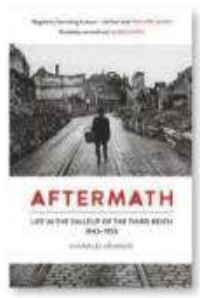
Black and British: A Forgotten History
by David Olusoga
(Picador, 640 pages, £12.99)

A shared past

In this updated edition of David Olusoga's acclaimed 2016 book, the historian and broadcaster traces the enduring relationship between Africa's peoples and Britain. Already incisive and passionate in its first iteration, this edition includes new material exploring the ways in which this past has manifested in the recent present, from the Windrush scandal to the Black Lives Matter movement.

GERMANY

Aftermath: Life in the Fallout of the Third Reich, 1945–1955
by Harald Jähner
(WH Allen, 400 pages, £20)

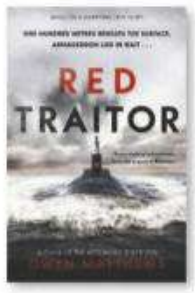


Reckoning and reconstruction

What was life like for the inhabitants of a shattered Germany in the years after the Second World War? This question is at the heart of Harald Jähner's eye-opening and often moving 2019 book, translated into English for the first time. From material deprivations to the reactions sparked by an emotional reckoning of the war's horrors – guilt, violence, self-pity – it's a sobering look at how societies rebuild.

FICTION

Red Traitor
by Owen Matthews
(Bantam Press, 336 pages, £16.99)

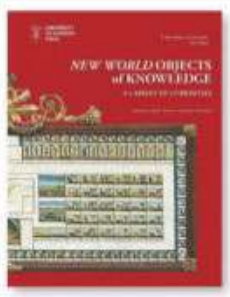


Crisis actors

July 1962. KGB lieutenant colonel Alexander Vasin is on the trail of a US spy thought to be operating high up in Soviet command – a search that seems fruitless. Then Vasin stumbles across something larger: the planned deployment of men and ordnance on the island of Cuba. This dynamic thriller skilfully weaves its story around one of the 20th-century's most tense moments, the Cuban missile crisis.

LATIN AMERICA

New World Objects of Knowledge
edited by Mark Thurner and Juan Pimentel
(UoL Press, 300 pages, £55)



Object lessons

This illustrated guide tells the story of Latin America and its often overlooked global influence through 40 key artefacts. From the huge (Machu Picchu, human impacts on the Amazon river) to the small (pearls, potatoes, pieces of eight), the variety reflects the breadth of the area's culture. This is a weighty affair, in terms of both scholarly detail and price, offering a valuable window onto a fascinating history.

ANTHROPOLOGY

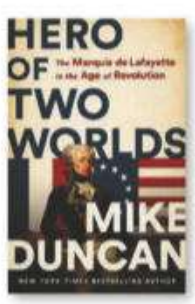
Being a Human: Adventures in 40,000 Years of Consciousness
by Charles Foster
(Profile, 400 pages, £16.99)

Revolutions of the head

Whereas some histories focus on merely an entire war or decade, this book has a much broader scope: the evolution of human consciousness. From the first hunter-gatherers to our Neolithic ancestors and the profound philosophical shifts of the Enlightenment, this is the biggest of big-picture accounts. As befits its subject, it blends the humanistic with the idiosyncratic throughout.

BIOGRAPHY

Hero of Two Worlds
by Mike Duncan
(PublicAffairs, 512 pages, £25)



Head of the revolutions

French aristocrat Gilbert du Motier, Marquis de Lafayette has quite the CV: a key player in both the American Revolutionary War and the French Revolution, he became a celebrated figure in both nations – hence the title of this major new biography. US author and podcaster Mike Duncan explores Lafayette's remarkable life and the lessons it might yield about the political turmoil of the 21st century. H

Written in the stars

This 1411 horoscope of Iskandar Sultan – revealing the position of the planets on the day of his birth, 25 April 1384 – features in a new V&A exhibition showcasing Iranian artwork and design

BRITISH MUSEUM/WELLCOME COLLECTION

ENCOUNTERS

88 DIARY: LISTEN / WATCH / VISIT
By **Jonathan Wright, Rhiannon Davies** and **Samantha Nott**
94 EXPLORE... Llandrindod Wells, Powys

VISIT

Cultural celebration

Iran was the cradle of one of history's greatest civilisations – yet its exquisite artworks remain unknown to many. A new V&A exhibition is set to change that, exploring the past 5,000 years of Iranian culture through the lens of art.

A vibrant array of more than 300 objects captures some of the key themes woven through Iran's history: empire and kingship, the rise of Islam, and writing and poetry. We see its beginning as a fledgling civilisation, brought to life via pottery decorated with cavorting animals; the sprawling Persian empire and its fall at the hands of Alexander the Great; and Iran's place in the world today.

Highlights include illustrated depictions of parts of the *Shahnameh*, or "Book of Kings" – a poem completed in the 11th century that consists of more than 50,000 rhyming couplets. Elsewhere, the lavish interior of a dome from Isfahan, one of Iran's major cities, is recreated with 10-metre-long curved paintings of tilework patterns hanging from the ceiling.

Epic Iran

The V&A / Until 12 September / Booking required
vam.ac.uk

A disused tunnel at Euston Underground station. A new show reveals the Tube's abandoned sites

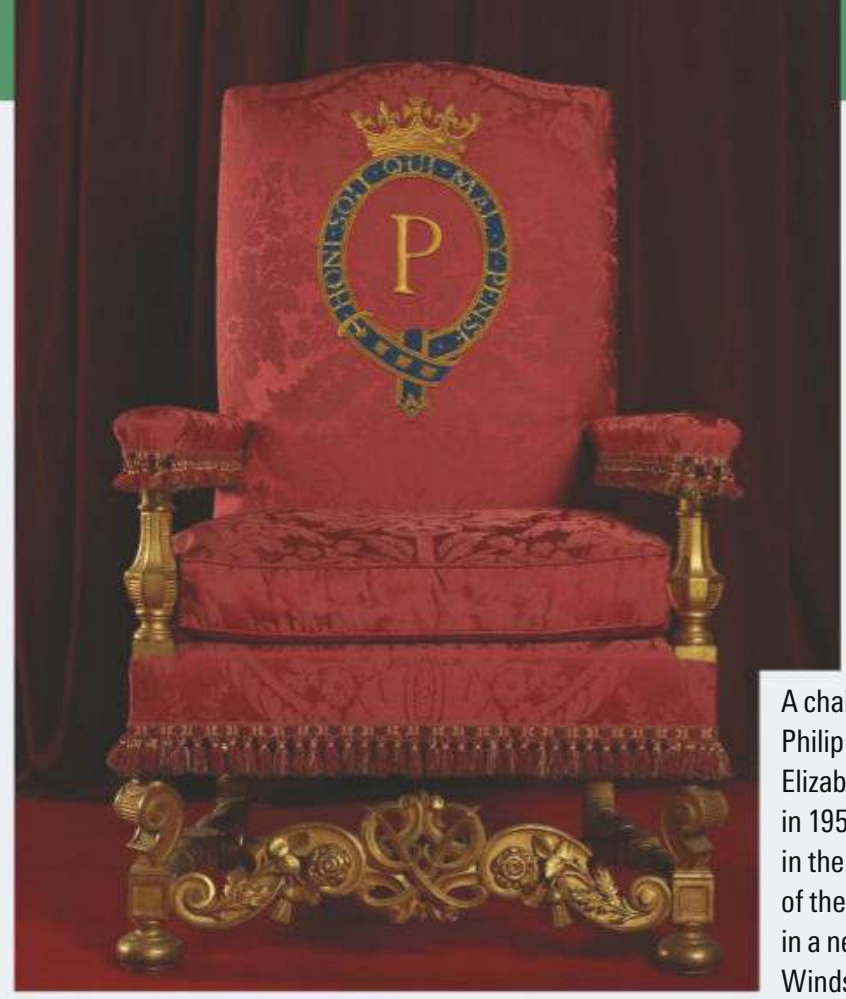
WATCH

Subterranean marvels

Never a man to miss an excuse to view anything train-related, Tim Dunn (*The Architecture the Railways Built*) teams up with Siddy Holloway from the London Transport Museum to visit those parts of London's Tube network that the public doesn't get to see. Together, in a new series, they reveal a world of lost stations, disused tunnels and redundant lift shafts.

Some of the sites Holloway and Dunn visit are decidedly spooky, such as North End station under Hampstead Heath, which was abandoned before completion and later served as a Cold War bunker. In other shows, the duo see the remains of the Tube's only spiral escalator and look upon the faded grandeur of Piccadilly Circus.

Secrets of the London Underground
Yesterday / Expected to air in July



A chair made for Prince Philip in honour of Queen Elizabeth's coronation in 1953. The prince's role in the coronation is one of the subjects explored in a new exhibition at Windsor Castle

VISIT

Royal memories

Following Prince Philip's death in April, two linked exhibitions are being staged at Windsor Castle and the Palace of Holyroodhouse to celebrate his life. The Windsor display explores his role in the Queen's coronation and features gifts presented to the prince, such as a First Nations feather headdress and a grasshopper-shaped wine cooler from then French president Georges Pompidou. The display at Holyroodhouse, meanwhile, delves into Philip's naval career and his wedding, featuring invitations and a breakfast menu from the big day.

Prince Philip: A Celebration
Windsor Castle and the Palace of Holyroodhouse / Until 20 September in Windsor; 23 July–31 Oct in Holyroodhouse / Booking required / *rct.uk*

Livestock carcasses are burned during the 2001 foot-and-mouth disease outbreak, the focus of a new documentary

LISTEN

Unnecessary slaughter?

Images of burning carcasses became grimly familiar in 2001 as, during Britain's worst ever outbreak of foot-and-mouth disease, more than 6 million cattle, sheep and pigs were culled. It was a national catastrophe that played out locally across farming communities such as Craswall in Herefordshire.

As broadcaster Dave Howard explores by returning to his childhood home for a new Radio 4 documentary, this was a time when hill farmers had to look on as officials oversaw the destruction of their livestock. At least one farmer took his life during the outbreak – a death that became especially poignant when a laboratory test conducted on animals from the area showed no local presence of the disease.

Black Hill, Bleak Summer
BBC Radio 4 / Tuesday 27 July

ALAMY/ROYAL COLLECTION TRUST

US sitcom *Sex and the City* represented the idea of a female thirty-something "singleton" in the 1990s

LISTEN

All by myself

Most adults today expect to spend time when they're unattached, to the extent that we take the condition of being single rather for granted. And yet, just as with marriage and family life, it's a state of being that has its own rich history, as a new documentary presented by writer, historian and former dating columnist Zoe Strimpel explores.

Take the lives of so-called "surplus" women in the wake of the First World War and the flu pandemic that followed. This was a time when women outnumbered men in the UK by around 1.7 million, and many women inevitably couldn't find partners. But women adapted to their situations and along the way subverted the stereotype of the barren spinster.

Closing in on the present, Strimpel traces the birth of the modern single person. In the 1990s, for example, the notion of the "singleton" – represented in popular culture by *Bridget Jones's Diary* and *Sex and the City* – shaped a generation's ideas about the pressures, and pleasures, of being an unhitched thirty-something. As for the 21st century, dating in the post-Tinder age is, suggests Strimpel, "chaos".

Archive on Four: Singled Out
BBC Radio 4 / Saturday 31 July

WEEKLY TV & RADIO
Visit **historyextra.com** for weekly updates on upcoming television and radio programmes

ALAMY/GETTY IMAGES

HISTORY ON THE AIRWAVES

"We are careless with our history – taking note of the period in which England came together might help us"

Broadcaster and satirist **IAN HISLOP** tells us about his new series, which looks at four great Anglo-Saxon kingdoms – East Anglia, Mercia, Northumbria and Wessex – and how they were eventually united

What's the central idea of the series?
It explores what's left to us of those great Anglo-Saxon kingdoms. We tend to feel that the Romans waved goodbye and then, a bit later, the Normans said hello – and in between, there's an attitude of, "Well, it's quite difficult, we won't waste too much time on *that*." That seems to me to be incredibly unfair. What's interesting is that archaeology has turned up evidence that isn't there in written texts.

So the idea was to look at four kingdoms, what they did, what they left, and why we ended up with England. I think the creation of a unity out of these four kingdoms is an extraordinary story.

What makes these kingdoms distinct?
Geography is paramount. One of the great things about the Anglo-Saxons is just how blunt they were. Northumbria gets its name because it's north of the river Humber – that's it. I certainly found that in Northumbria the cultural north-south divide is pretty clear from a very early period. Each kingdom then develops its own culture and history. This is a period in which, in terms of internal fighting, there was essentially no peace at all – a terrific advertisement for a unified country!

Are the unifying efforts of Alfred and his successors a key part of this story?
Yes, and I'm now very keen on [10th-century king] Edgar. Did anyone warn you that I have a boring metal detector anecdote? I went out on the most achingly beautiful day in Shropshire with a local amateur detectorist and his friend, the farmer on whose land he has a concession, and a man from the British Museum. I thought I had joined *The Detectorists*, one of my favourite series.

Anyway, we found an Anglo-Saxon penny that had been cut to become a halfpenny. The man from the museum took one look and said: "This never happens, I'm having it." This was a coin minted by Edgar, one of Alfred's successors – incredibly rare! I thought: "I don't believe it. I'm doing a series about physical evidence and the unifying process of the kingdoms, and we've found a coin from the man who was one of the earliest kings of all England."

If these kingdoms still exert such an influence, do you think that we don't take enough care over our history?
That's absolutely right. We are careless, and taking note of the period in which England came together might help us. Lots of people ask "why are people always trying to rewrite history?" – but in my view, there's not *enough* history.

This Union: The Ghost Kingdoms of England is set to begin on BBC Radio 4 on Monday 2 August

A carved stone cross in Eyam, Derbyshire, once part of Mercia. Ian Hislop's new radio series explores four important Anglo-Saxon kingdoms

This sweet jam with a hint of apricot is perfect spread on toast

TASTE

"Mock apricot" carrot jam

Carrot jam has been a staple in Middle Eastern cuisine since the 12th century, and it historically proved popular in Britain too. Once a Victorian treat, carrot jam experienced a significant resurgence during the Second World War, because carrots were not subject to rationing, could be grown at home, and – according to the Ministry of Information – even helped people see in the dark.

INGREDIENTS

500g carrot puree, made from boiled carrots
500g raw sugar
Juice of one lemon
Zest of half a lemon, grated or cut into fine strips
Five apricot kernels
Two tablespoons brandy

METHOD

Put the carrot puree in a large saucepan and bring to the boil. Add the sugar, lemon juice and zest, and apricot kernels.

Boil until the mixture has thickened and gels quickly when spooned on to a cold plate.

Remove from the heat and take out the apricot kernels (if you can spot them). Stir the brandy through the jam and decant into sterilised jars.

Allow the jam to cool, then store in the fridge and eat as soon as possible.

Recipe adapted from app.ckbk.com/recipe/prid67377c01s002r024/carrot-jam

A suit worn by Slade member Jim Lea features in a new series of behind-the-scenes peeks at the V&A

WATCH

Conserving the past

The V&A bills itself as "the world's leading museum of art, design and performance". Its collections, which span such fields of human creative endeavour as fashion, theatre and photography, include 2.3 million objects, many of which are unique and irreplaceable – such as Slade band member Jim Lea's red lamé suit, recently rescued from an attic after he discovered a suitcase full of old stage gear.

As the fly-on-the-wall series going behind the scenes at the V&A returns for a second run, it falls to conservator Jo, who grew up listening to Slade, to check the suit over. Only after rips in the delicate lamé have been repaired will it be ready to join the V&A's rock and pop collection, a precious – and garish – memento of the glam rock era.

We also hear from Lea himself, who reveals how his now 95-year-old mother has never really forgiven him for becoming a rock star rather than a classical musician. Maybe a picture of his suit in the V&A will change her mind...

Secrets of the Museum
BBC Two / Expected to air in late July

This gold bird-shaped pin is part of the Galloway Hoard, currently on display at the National Museum of Scotland in Edinburgh

SAM NOTT/V&A MUSEUM/NATIONAL MUSEUMS SCOTLAND

VISIT

Treasure trove

Featuring intricately carved silver arm rings, bejewelled brooches and fragments of precious silk, the Galloway Hoard is the richest set of rare Viking-age artefacts ever unearthed in the United Kingdom. Made up of more than 100 objects, the hoard was buried in approximately AD 900 and lay undisturbed in the ground until 2014, when it was discovered by an unsuspecting metal detectorist.

In a new exhibition in Edinburgh, visitors can see these artefacts up close, and take the opportunity to delve even deeper via a selection of X-rays, CT scans and 3D models of the hoard.

The Galloway Hoard: Viking-Age Treasure
National Museum of Scotland, Edinburgh / Until 12 September / Booking required / *nms.ac.uk*

A sculpture that may have been made by Henry Moore (shown c1965) is explored in *Fake or Fortune?*

WATCH

Uncertain provenance

Philip Mould and Fiona Bruce are teaming up again to present a new series of *Fake or Fortune?*, the show that details the hunt for the stories behind potentially overlooked masterpieces. The first episode focuses on a sculpture discovered in the long grass of a Norfolk home. It's the property of retired dairy farmer Neil Betts and his wife, Barbara.

The couple had thought little of the piece, left to them by a neighbour, until a friend suggested it looked like the work of Henry Moore, one of the most important British artists of the 20th century. Could this possibly be true? If so, the sculpture may, thinks expert Mould, be worth as much as £1m…

Fake or Fortune?
BBC One / Expected to air in late July

These customised Adidas IKEA Ultraboost trainers are one of many pioneering pairs on show at the Design Museum

VISIT

Best foot forward

Beloved by athletes and trendsetters alike, trainers are cultural symbols of our age. An exhibition at the Design Museum shares the stories of iconic shoes – such as the Converse Chuck Taylor All Star, the basketball shoe which has been in production since 1921 – as well as the people who wore them. From Vans-wearing skate-boarders of 1970s and 80s California to the young people of inner-city New York who wore the same sneakers as their streetball-playing heroes, the history of trainers and their vibrant subcultures is brought to life.

Sneakers Unboxed: Studio to Street
The Design Museum, London / Until 24 October / Booking required / *designmuseum.org*

WATCH

"Thirteen dead, nothing said"

Events in London 40 years ago defined race relations for a generation. That's the argument at the centre of a new trio of documentaries from directors Steve McQueen (*Small Axe*) and James Rogan.

The first programme revisits a fire that erupted at a birthday party in New Cross during the early hours of 18 January 1981, in which 13 teenagers died. One of the survivors, Anthony Berbeck, was traumatised by the loss of his friends and died in 1983 after falling from a balcony. It's long been suspected that the fire was caused by an arson attack, yet the coroner suggested that the blaze was accidental and the jury returned an open verdict.

The tragedy galvanised protest and helped inspire the Black People's Day of Action in March 1981, in which 20,000 marched from New Cross to Hyde Park. The Brixton riots that April were rooted in anger over perceived official inaction in investigating the blaze, as well as disproportionate police use of stop-and-search powers – the hated "sus laws".

Throughout, those who were there offer first-hand testimony, helping to put these events at the centre of Britain's wider national story. H

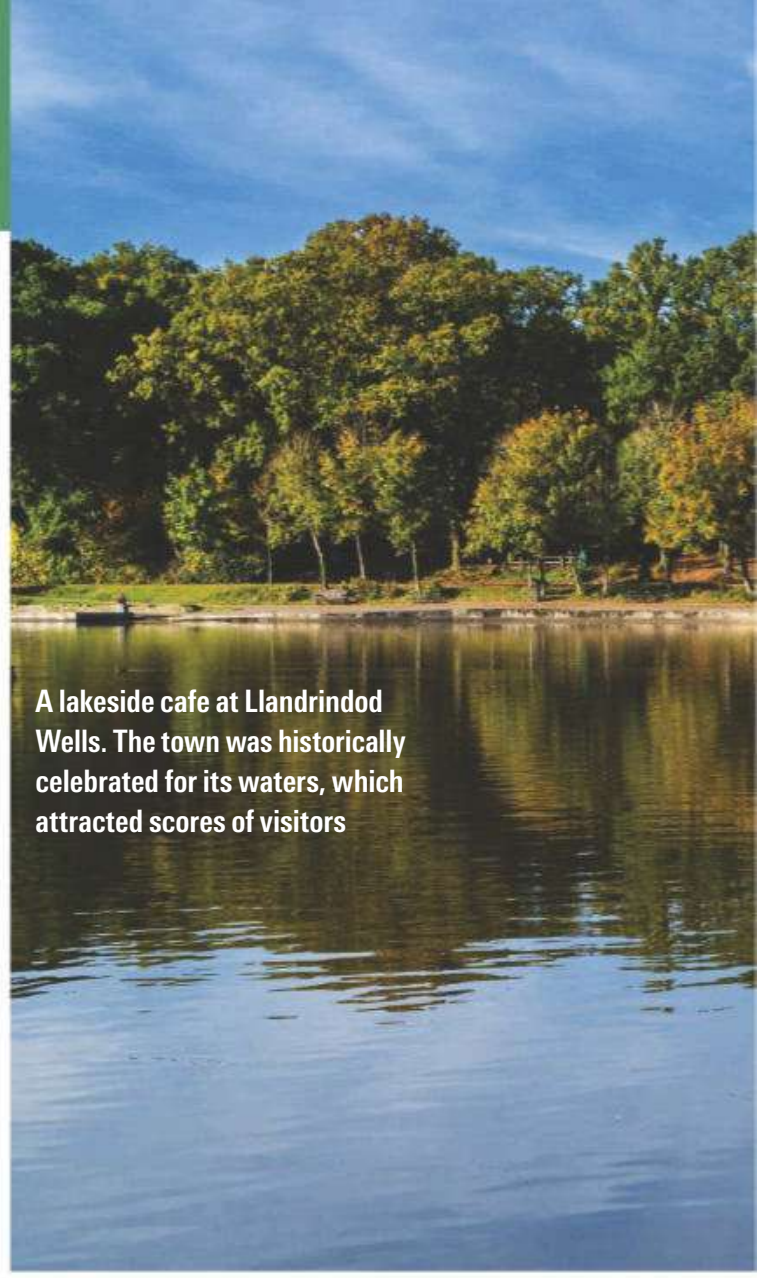
Uprising
BBC One / Expected to air mid-July

Marchers protest against official inaction following a fire in New Cross in 1981. A new documentary explores the story

GETTY IMAGES/ED REEVE/SHUTTERSTOCK

The town that time forgot

Lauded for its healing waters, Llandrindod Wells once attracted the cream of British society. Today it's a treasure trove of Victorian architecture, replete with grand towers and turrets. **YORK MEMBERY** pays a visit



A lakeside cafe at Llandrindod Wells. The town was historically celebrated for its waters, which attracted scores of visitors

"So you're off to the town that time forgot?" a Welsh friend joked when I said I was going to Llandrindod Wells in hilly mid-Wales for the weekend. He wasn't being mean, it just slipped out – but in a weird sort of way he was right… and wrong.

Anyone travelling back in time, Doctor Who-like, to the "Llandod" (as locals refer to it) of the 1900s would have come across the proud, self-styled "Premier Spa of Wales" – its "hygienic capital" – in its heyday.

The "healing qualities" of the spring waters began attracting visitors to the area in the 18th century. But it was the coming of the railway in the 1860s that really spurred on its growth, and led to the construction of a string of lavish hotels, as well as guest houses, shops and homes.

Healing waters

Spas were all the rage in the late 19th and early 20th centuries, and the rich and famous headed to Llandrindod during "the season" for rest, relaxation and to take the waters. Among the visitors were David Lloyd George, Edward Elgar, and, after the First World War, the Prince of Wales (the future Edward VIII).

Old sepia photographs in the town's Radnorshire Museum show visitors in their finery at the Pump House Hotel queuing to take the waters for all manner of ailments, be it "acne, hysteria or leprosy". The purging qualities of the waters were also much-celebrated. One man "reputedly discharged a worm seven feet long and the width of a large thumb nail" after consuming several glasses. The amount drunk typically varied from two to six glasses at a time, depending on the ailment (the charge at both pump rooms was 6d per day for any amount of water).

The interwar years witnessed a slow but steady decline in Llandrindod's fortunes, as a result of changing fashions; its remote location didn't help, either. Nowadays, few of the town's grand hotels still stand; one is the family-owned Metropole, boasting a modern swimming pool, sauna and spa treatment complex, which "survived through force of will", says owner Justin Baird-Murray. However, Llandrindod remains a treasure trove of red-brick late Victorian and Edwardian architecture. The influence of the Arts and Crafts movement is evident in the tall chimneys and tile-hung walls, and a number of buildings boast eye-catching towers and turrets.

The spa town legacy has also bequeathed Llandrindod plenty of green spaces, such as Temple Gardens, with its historic bandstand, and Rock Park, where you can freely sample the iron-tasting local spring water – definitely an acquired taste.

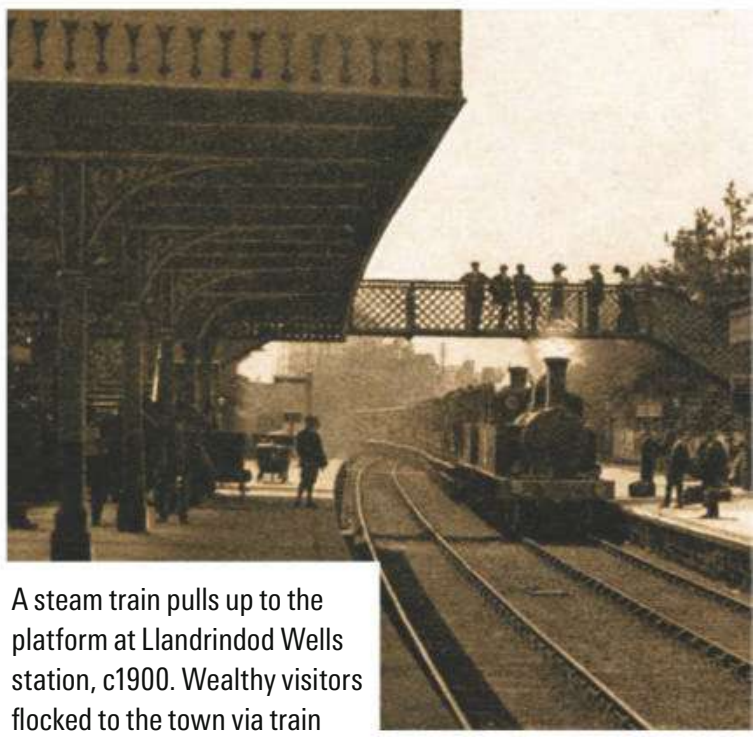
There are two other sites of particular historical interest in the area: the National Cycle Museum and the Elan Valley Reservoirs. The former is home to a priceless collection of more than 200 bicycles, taking in everything from an 1818 Hobby Horse, which had neither brakes nor pedals, to the infamous 1985 Sinclair C5 velomobile. The Elan Valley Reservoirs, where Barnes Wallis carried out tests to prove the feasibility of his famous wartime "bouncing bomb", are a half-hour drive away; all amenities are currently open, though the visitor centre cafe is offering only takeaway services.

Yes, there might be a touch of yesteryear to Llandrindod Wells, but you're sure to be entranced by the faded glory of Wales's one-time premier spa resort. H

"One man 'reputedly discharged a worm seven feet long and the width of a large thumb nail' after drinking the spa's water"

York Membery is a journalist and regular contributor to *BBC History Magazine*

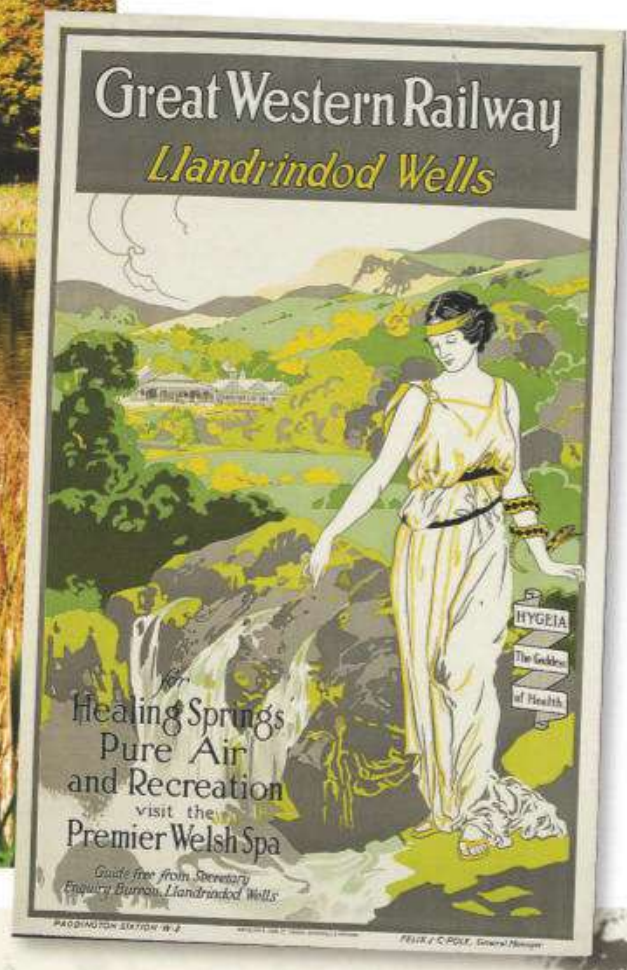
VISIT For more information on the town, head to **llandrindod.co.uk**



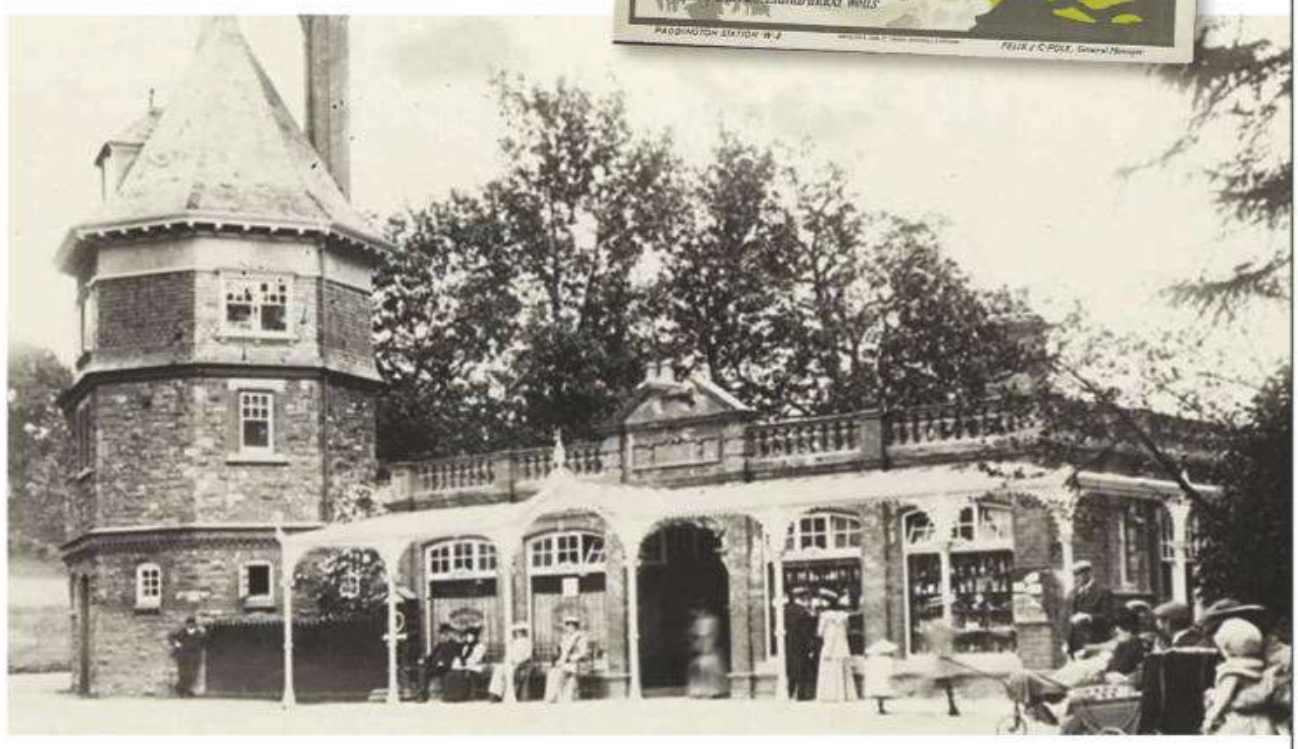
A steam train pulls up to the platform at Llandrindod Wells station, c1900. Wealthy visitors flocked to the town via train

ALAMY/BRIDGEMAN/SHUTTERSTOCK/ /RADNORSHIRE MUSEUM

Early models on display at the National Cycle Museum. The collection comprises more than 200 bicycles



A Great Western Railway advert for Llandrindod Wells. The coming of the railway spurred the town's growth



Visitors relax by the Pump House Hotel, early 1900s. Few of the town's grand Victorian hotels remain today

A dam overflows in the Elan Valley Reservoirs. Barnes Wallis tested the feasibility of his "bouncing bomb" in this area

PRIZE CROSSWORD

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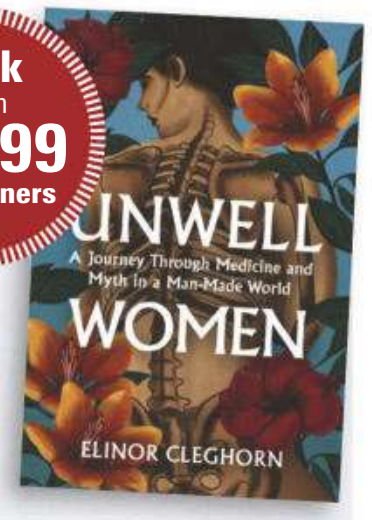
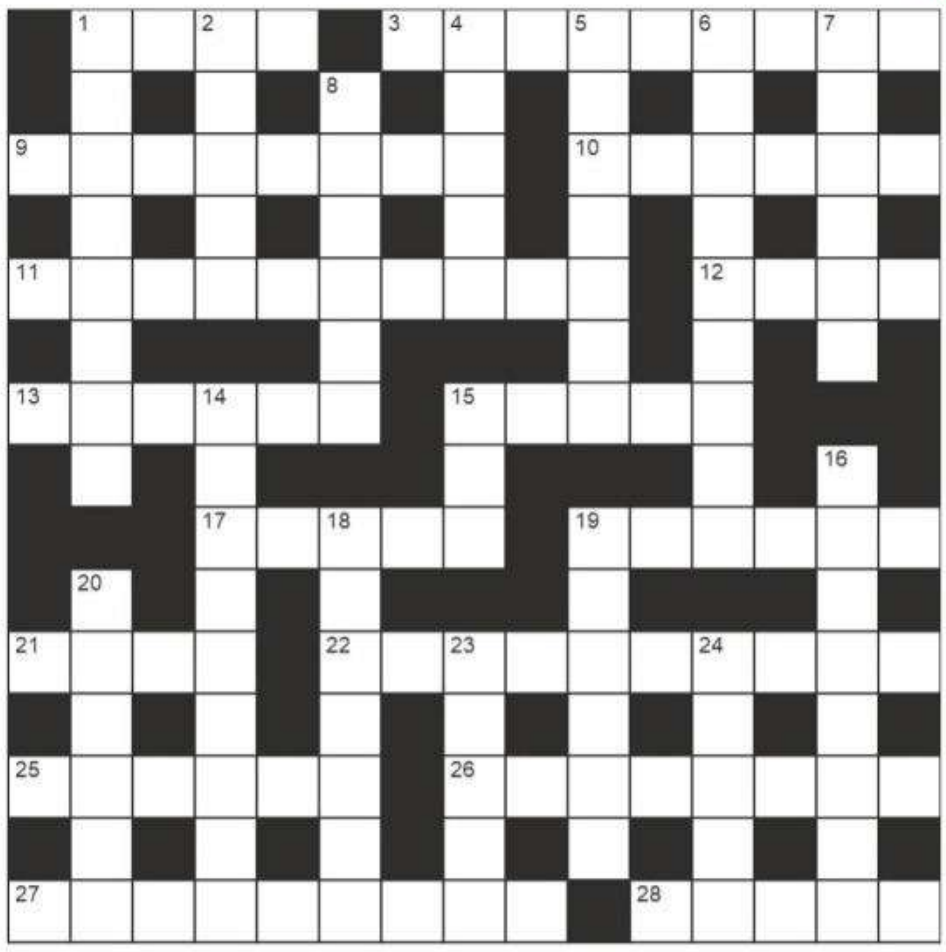


Unwell Women:
A Journey Through Medicine and Myth in a Man-Made World

By Elinor Cleghorn

This insightful book unpacks the roots of the misunderstanding, mystification and misdiagnosis of women's ailments, from the idea of the "wandering womb" in ancient Greece to the dawn of hysteria. *To read Elinor's feature on women's health throughout history, turn to page 60.*



Across

1 See 25 across
3 The leader of the rebel army in the Third Servile War against Rome (73–71 BC) (9)
9 Location, about 40km from Athens, of a Greek victory over the Persians in 490 BC, commemorated in modern times by a challenging sporting event (8)
10 ____ Lindgren, the Swedish writer of children's books and creator of Pippi Longstocking (shown below) (6)
11 Mexican painter famous for her brilliantly coloured self-portraits (5,5)
12 Austrian city that grew in importance during the 15th-century as the residence of Holy Roman Emperor Frederick III (4)
13/18 Distinguished Chilean writer, related to a former president of that country, who was awarded the (US) Presidential Medal of Freedom in 2014 (6,7)
15 Local official, such as a chief magistrate in Anglo-Saxon times (5)
17 See 15 down
19 Author of *The General Theory of Employment, Interest and Money* (1936), a major influence on economic theory (6)
21 Thomas ____, influential German author of *Death in Venice* and other works (4)
22 The aims of the Irish National ____ ____, formed in 1879, were the "three Fs" (fair rent, fixity of tenure and free sale) (4,6)
25/1 across Founded in 1916, this government facility near Salisbury is said to be the world's oldest chemical warfare research installation (6,4)
26 A major abbey (now a ruin) in North Yorkshire, founded in 1132. It was the first Cistercian abbey in northern England (8)
27 British Labour politician whose achievements included (as minister for the arts, 1964–70) the founding of the Open University (6,3)
28 Henry ____, one of the founders of a famous British luxury car manufacturing company (5)

Down

1 One of the longest-serving US secretaries of state (1961–69), a controversial defender of US participation in the Vietnam War (4,4)
2 The ____, an ancient large, elevated tract of land in south-east England, taking its name from the Anglo-Saxon for "forest" (5)
4 Weekly satirical magazine founded in 1841, also called *The London Charivari*, that ceased publication (for the second time) in 2002 (5)
5 Walter Ralegh attempted to found this English settlement in America, which became known as the "Lost Colony" after its inhabitants mysteriously disappeared (7)
6 Heavy weaponry, as used in the quote attributed to Josef Stalin: "____ is the god of war" (9)
7 Organisations made illegal in Britain by the Combination Acts of 1799 and 1800 (6)
8 Hebrew coin and weight mentioned in the Bible, but which originated in an earlier civilisation (6)
14 The "____ Plot", named after the Catholic man who conspired to assassinate Elizabeth I and install Mary, Queen of Scots, on the English throne (9)
15/17 Anglicised version of Barbarossa, byname of the 15th and 16th-century Mediterranean pirate who became a grand admiral of the Ottoman empire (8)
16 "The ____", Plato's great philosophical work, written in the form of a dialogue on the nature of a just society and state (8)
18 See 13 across
19 Helen ____, blind and deaf author and activist who became an influential disability rights campaigner and a founding member of the American Civil Liberties Union (1920) (6)
20 Now capital of Pakistan's Punjab province, this city enjoyed a golden age from the 16th century under the Mughal dynasty (6)
23 Relating to the medieval European people whose chief gods were Odin and Thor (5)
24 A mission in San Antonio, the site of historic resistance by Texan fighters for independence from Mexico (1836) (5)

Compiled by **Eddie James**

HOW TO ENTER

● Open to residents of the UK (& Channel Islands). Post entries to ***BBC History Magazine*, August 2021 Crossword, PO Box 501, Leicester LE94 0AA** or email them to ***august2021@historycomps.co.uk*** by 5pm on **4 August 2021**. ● Entrants must supply full name, address and phone number. The winners will be the first correct entries drawn at random after the closing time. Winners' names will appear in the October 2021 issue. By entering, participants agree to be bound by the terms and conditions shown in full in the box below. Immediate Media Company Ltd (publishers of *BBC History Magazine*) will use personal details in accordance with the Immediate Privacy Policy at *immediatemedia.co.uk/privacy-policy/privacy/* ● Immediate Media Company Ltd (publishers of *BBC History Magazine*) would love to send you newsletters, together with special offers and other promotions. If you would not like to receive these, please write 'NO INFO' on your entry. ● Branded BBC titles are licensed from or published jointly with BBC Studios (the commercial arm of the BBC). Please tick here ❑ if you'd like to receive regular newsletters, special offers and promotions from BBC Studios by email. Your information will be handled in accordance with the BBC Studios privacy policy: *bbcstudios.com/privacy. – bbc.com/editorialguidelines/guidance/code-of-conduct*

Solution to our June 2021 crossword

Across 1 Jiang Qing 6 Wills 9 Nerva 10 Royalist 12 Bath 13 Ethel Smyth 14 Titoism 16 Sargent 18 Pueblo 20 Pullman 22 Crimean War 25 Saga 27 Trireme 28 Chirac 29 Druid 30 Bletchley
Down: 2 Ionia 3 Northcote 4 Quakers 5 North 7 Islam 8 Lusitania 11 Yalta 15 Imperator 17 Goldsmith 19 Leakey 21 Utrecht 23 Meiji 24 Wheel 26 Grace

Five winners of *Six Tudor Queens: Katherine Parr*
J Muir, Devon; A Rodwell, London; S Ragnall, Lancashire; C Greenwood, Lancashire; N Jones, Somerset

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ALAMY

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A selection of the exciting content on our website **historyextra.com**

Anne Boleyn: colour-blind casting and historical accuracy

From its first announcement last autumn, Channel 5's drama *Anne Boleyn* has hit the headlines for its colour-blind casting of English actress Jodie Turner-Smith as the Tudor queen. But, say historians including Dan Jones and Miranda Kaufmann, the adaptation is offering a fresh take on an old story and paving the way for new approaches to historical drama.
bit.ly/AnneBoleynDrama

Your guide to Catherine de Medici

Often regarded as brutal and calculating, the powerful Catherine de Medici is much maligned. But how should we regard her actions and power? Estelle Paranque considers the life and legacy of the fascinating royal, from her historical unpopularity to her influence on the history of Europe.
bit.ly/CatherineDeMedici

Historical fiction recommendations for children

What are the best historical novels for young people? We reveal our top picks, and you share your own childhood favourites.
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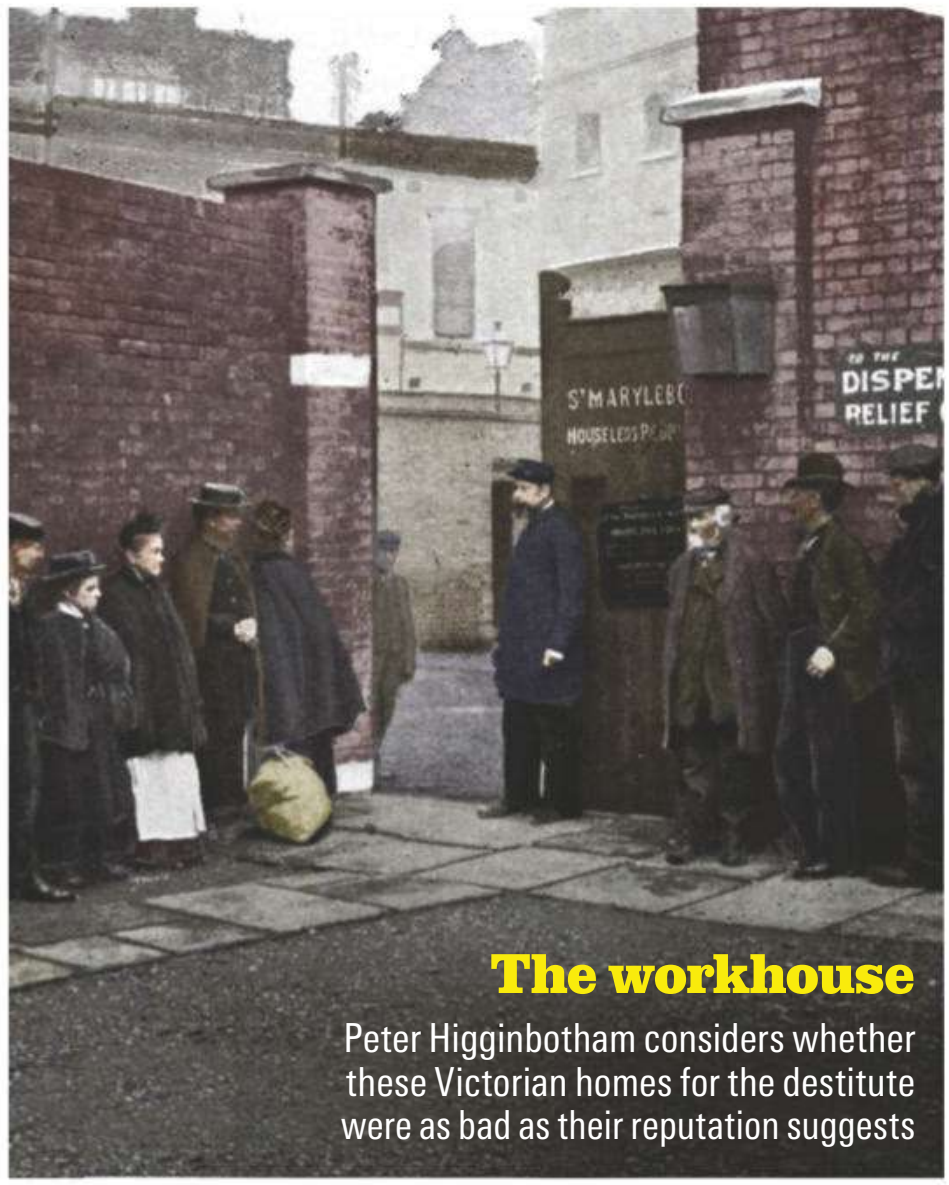
NEXT MONTH

September issue on sale 5 August 2021



The workhouse

Peter Higginbotham considers whether these Victorian homes for the destitute were as bad as their reputation suggests

Man in the Iron Mask

Josephine Wilkinson reveals her theory about the identity of the French prisoner

Witch trials

Ellie Cawthorne considers what may have motivated the persecution of people accused of witchcraft in Salem in 1692

Large Georgians

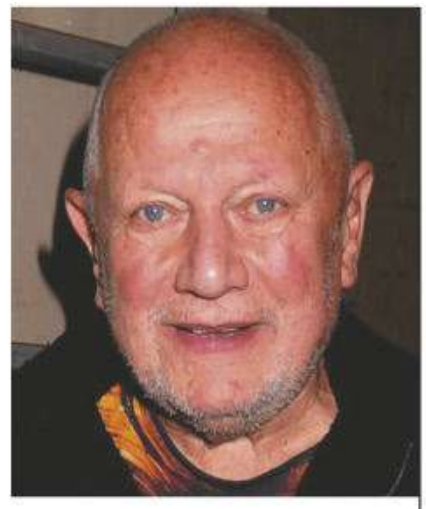
Freya Gowrley explores cultural representations of fatness in the 18th century

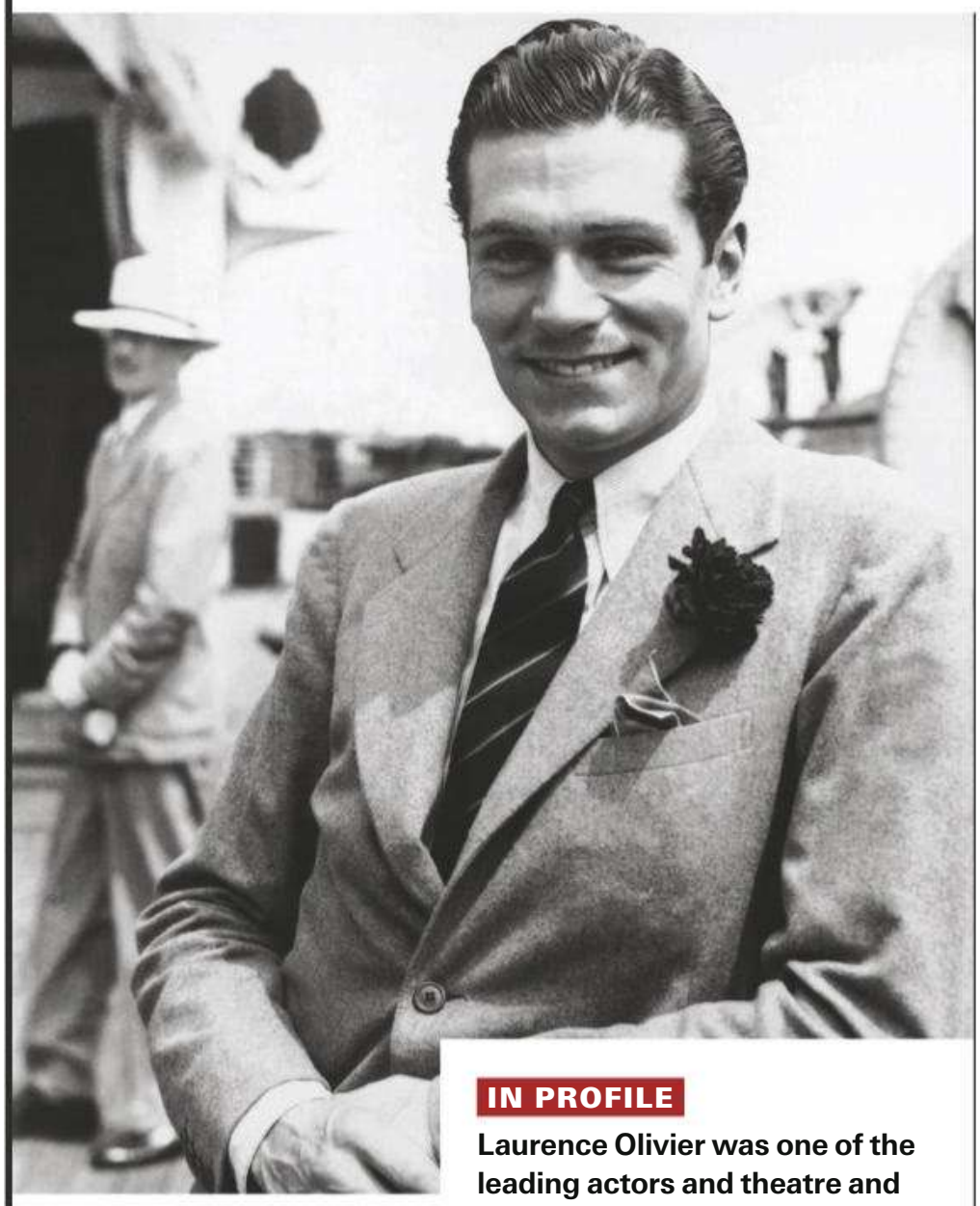
MY HISTORY HERO

Actor and author ***Steven Berkoff*** *chooses*

Laurence Olivier

1907–89





Laurence Olivier pictured in New York, 1933. "In my young mind he was theatrical royalty – almost a kind of monarch," says Steven Berkoff

IN PROFILE

Laurence Olivier was one of the leading actors and theatre and film directors of his generation. He was also the founding director of the National Theatre. The son of a clergyman, among his most notable stage performances were the title role in Shakespeare's *Richard III* and Archie Rice in *The Entertainer*. He also starred in hit films including *Henry V* (1944), *The Prince and the Showgirl* (1957) and *Marathon Man* (1976). The three-times married thespian died aged 82.

> He dissolved himself in the character he was playing, adopting their personality to the point where he forgot who he was

When did you first hear about Laurence Olivier? As a teenager. I would see posters plugging his latest film or play, and in my young mind he was theatrical royalty – almost a kind of monarch. I started seeing Olivier's movies and then saw him on stage – the way he did the tap dance as a broken-down old performer in [the 1960 British film] *The Entertainer* was quite remarkable.

What kind of man was he? A perfectionist who believed in staying fit. There was a real dynamic to him and I think he wanted to be, and saw himself, as the greatest actor of his generation. For him, acting justified his existence. Perhaps as a result of having a churchman father, I think he had a messianic-type ambition to achieve his full potential in his profession. He wanted to see how far a human being could reach as an actor, but he also loved the whole process of being directed, and directing.

What made Olivier a hero? Being able to play a role and take it further than anyone else would ever dream. He somehow dissolved himself in the character he was playing, literally adopting their personality and behaviour to the point where he forgot who he was. He also knew – really knew – how to interpret the language of Shakespeare. Lastly, he began the inauguration of the National Theatre; without him we probably wouldn't have a national theatre.

Is there anything that you don't particularly admire about him? What he did as an actor was so admirable that it overwhelms any faults he may have possessed.

How do you think he would have coped during lockdown? I think he would have carried on working in whatever capacity possible, be it writing, doing audio work or appearing in streamed plays.

Can you see any parallels between Olivier's life and your own? Only that we both took the bull by the horns and made our own careers. We didn't wait by the phone. If we wanted to do something, we would do it.

What would you ask Olivier if you could meet him? I would just tell him how fortunate I felt to be alive at the time that my Lord Laurence was giving such shattering, illuminating performances.

Steven Berkoff was talking to York Membery

Steven Berkoff is an actor, author and playwright. His latest book, *Poems for the Working Class*, is available via *stevenberkoff.com*. He is currently appearing in *Hamlet* at the Theatre Royal Windsor

LISTEN

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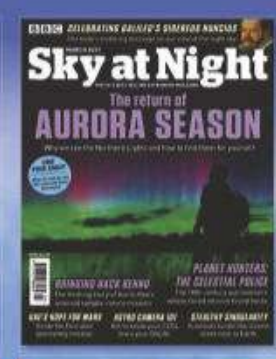

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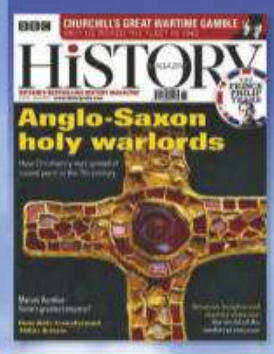

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